Celebrating 5 years

Purposeful

GENERATION EQUALITY

THE TIME IS NOW TO RE-DISTRIBUTE POWER AND RESOURCES TO GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINISTS

ABOUT THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS COLLECTIVE

The With and For Girls Collective (WFG-Collective) is a group of justice funders committed to resourcing girls' activism for the long term.

In an effort to support girls' brave and powerful resistance, the WFG-Collective is dedicated to learning and transforming their own grant-making practices and reorganising power to drive more resources to the political work of girls and gender-expansive youth.

Housed at Purposeful, the WFG-Collective is made up of Women's Funds, International NGOs, Public and Private Foundations, and the only collaborative of its kind, drawing from different points in the girls' funding ecosystem.

WITH AND FOR GIRLS

INTRODUCTION

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is a once in a generation opportunity to mobilise new momentum to tackle gender injustice and revive the promise of the Beijing Declaration. Young people – especially girls and young feminists – have been central to the vision, values, and politics of Generation Equality. Showing up with the same bravery, strategic clarity, and organising power that they bring to their activism across social justice causes, they have been the beating heart of GEF. Yet their ability to organise, negotiate, and hold others accountable has been impacted by a profound lack of resources – both for their participation in the formal process, and for their activism overall.

This report seeks to document some of the challenges they have faced, analyse commitments that have been made, and make recommendations on how to bridge the significant gap between what is and what should be.

SCRAPING THE BARREL OF RESOURCES FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP:

- Young feminists have long been impacted by philanthropy's struggle to move resources at any sort of speed or scale to autonomous girl and youth-led organising. Yet still, the sheer inability of any of the major players within the GEF process to sustainably resource girl and youth co-ownership and leadership[1.] is striking. The challenges that pervade are undeniably rooted in patriarchy and colonialism.
- Not only have resources to facilitate meaningful co-ownership and leadership not been available, but when they have, infrastructural or operational realities of the donor system have created endless roadblocks.
- Money – even when available and committed to young people – has simply not reached them. This report reveals again and again how a lack of the most basic of resources – for example to pay for data or airtime, travel or translation – have shut young people out, again and again.

- That a generation of young feminist activists can put their minds and bodies (and shared through this report, their emotional and psychological well-being) on the line and be shut out so systematically from resources to support participation is a clear indictment of the formal systems around which GEF is built.
- Young activists who have designed and led across the value chain of GEF are tired. They are disillusioned. There is a collective sense that their love and labour, their deep expertise and strategic vision has not been sufficiently valued. It has been taken for granted. Still, they carry on. Why? Because they know how high the stakes are.
- Rather than a marginal issue, the ability to shift money – and therefore power – is central to the promise of Beijing. We must do better. And in order to do better, we must begin to name what has not worked.
- Designing, setting up and sustaining GEF has become an industry in and of itself. The sheer scale of intellectual and human resources committed to the process has at times obscured what should be the *core political purpose* of GEF. That is, to resource and sustain intersectional movements driving gender justice efforts and to transform unequal policies, laws, and practices to create a more gender equal world.
- It is against this backdrop that an opaque, and at times confusing, set of financial and policy commitments have been made by a cross-section of power holders connected to GEF.

WE MUST DO BETTER. AND IN ORDER TO DO BETTER, WE MUST BEGIN TO NAME WHAT HAS NOT WORKED

- While commitments made are impressive, it is strikingly clear through dialogue with young activists that there continues to be a gap between rhetoric and resources.

GEF is a platform not the end-goal. This report asks just where is the money for the actual autonomous girl and youth organising that is changing the world every day?

KEY TAKE-AWAYS FOR FUNDERS

- It is not too late to move more and better (sustainable, flexible, accessible) resources both to the co-ownership and leadership of girls and young feminist in the GEF process and to their continued, tireless organising and resistance.
- How you move resources is as important as how much. Whether you are funding youth-led organisations directly or via intermediaries, you hold great power and should consider how your funding practices should break down as opposed to reinforcing colonial power structures.
- If you need help doing things differently, invest in testing participatory approaches with girls and young feminists. The positive impact on both funding practices and on youth groups and movements is there [2].
- The recommendations set out in this report have been crafted with girl and young feminist activists with deep experience, good and bad, of accessing or trying to access funds. Take time to reflect on this and how they might be applicable to your work.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG ACTIVISTS

- Your work has not been in vain. While we still need to see action, we are hearing and seeing shifts in philanthropy and in what is considered meaningful within a multilateral process.
- Build stronger ties with other movements across generations, thematics and geographies; struggles are interconnected and interdependent. If you are new to the process, connect with other girls and young feminists to build new connections and to join collective advocacy efforts. The accompanying tool includes practical information on where to get started.
- Unite and make sure your spaces and movements are grounded in an ethic of love and collective care. Liberation is a process.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

There are two documents coming out of this research process. The first is this research report which outlines the methodology, findings, and recommendations. The audience is youth, funders and any other stakeholder that is interested in the Generation Equality process, in the leadership and co-ownership of girls and young people in multilateral advocacy processes such as these or in resourcing girl and young feminist groups more broadly. The report is accompanied by a short, practical toolkit that is specifically aimed at girl and young feminist groups to support their advocacy and organising in the Generation Equality process and beyond.

WHAT IS GENERATION EQUALITY?

In 2021, UN Women, in partnership with the governments of Mexico and Paris, held the Generation Equality Forums and launched a Global Acceleration Plan. The 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and its historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, considered the most comprehensive blueprint for girls and women's rights to date, is an opportunity for generations to come together to drive investment, collective power, and action for gender equality. Six visionary multi-sector Action Coalitions have been formed, each with a five-year blueprint. Action Coalition 6 on Feminist Movements and Leadership includes a specific priority action to resource girl and young feminist movements. Under each Action Coalition (AC), multi-stakeholder commitment-makers made policy, funding, and programmatic commitments. The process was guided by several governance structures including the Core Group, Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG), and the Youth Taskforce. The governance structure was complex and now, one year in, has been simplified into one Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Group. Two accountability frameworks are in development; the formal accountability process coordinated by UN Women, and a co-designed feminist accountability process, coordinated by Global Fund for Women and led by 22 grassroots feminist organisations in the Global South.

FUNDING GIRLS: PURPOSEFUL'S APPROACH

Purposeful is an Africa-rooted global hub for girls organising and activism. We are working towards a transformed world in which girls are living in safety, dignity, and freedom.

➜ **We believe that this work must be done with girls, not just for them.**

Grounded in feminist principles of solidarity and reciprocity, we are re-imagining what it means to hold movement resources in deep relationship with, and with deep accountability to, girls. Working across multiple levels – through global funding windows to deeply rooted community re-granting mechanisms – we re-frame grant-making practice so that girls and young feminists can define and determine resource distribution in the service of their own visions, goals, and dreams of freedom.

Girls live on the frontline of injustice – for most girls, being both young and female places them at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. While the specifics vary by geography the overall picture is the same: individual and collective potential is unrealised while systemic cycles of inequality persist. Entrenched systems of patriarchy, exploitation, and domination mean that all girls and all women are deeply vulnerable to violence and discrimination. Race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, ability, age, and other factors work together to deepen exclusion and harm even further.

Adolescent girls – young, poor, black, rural, and so on – are battling the compound effects of multiple forms of structural inequality, and it is therefore no surprise that they are also the girls who are most hidden and whose voices are most silenced. **Although the multiple forms of oppression they face should rightly see them front and centre of donor priorities and policy agendas, they are most likely to be shut out or forgotten.** This is how patriarchy exerts its control over girls even through the very structures that are meant to act as forces for 'development' and 'progress'.

Despite this reality, **girls are resisting** and as experts of their reality, are best placed to secure their rights, transform the systems, institutions and structures that oppress them as well as challenge the narratives and ideologies that justify their oppression. While their resistance is not sparked by access to funding, financial resources play a crucial role in supporting and sustaining their resistance.

➜ **To understand more, read the Purposeful Theory of Change. All of Purposeful's work is organised around a power building strategy, which is the focus of our publication, Building Girls' Power.**

WHY THIS ANALYSIS? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

In July 2021, during the Generation Equality Forum (GEF), a total of $40 billion USD was pledged to the six different Action Coalitions by a variety of stakeholders. We are one and a half years into the GEF process and girl and young feminist groups remain under-resourced and excluded from meaningful co-ownership of the formal accountability mechanism to hold power holders to account. It remains a complex and hard to navigate process, even for those closely involved. For girls, it is even murkier and the inaccessibility of the limited funds available is striking. Very little has been known about the details of this funding and many questions remain. With this analysis, we hope to create a better understanding of the financial commitments made to adolescents and young feminists during the GEF, though the details are, unfortunately, still difficult to surface.

WHAT HAVE GIRLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE CONTRIBUTED THUS FAR TO THE PROCESS?

The following list was compiled by Young Feminist Europe, the co-founder for which is also a co-author on this report, and has been supplemented further to include the impact and achievements of adolescent girls. It is categorised to reflect the different ways that girls and young feminists have led, shaped, and contributed to the GEF process. It is not exhaustive, and it is likely that girls and young feminists contributed in many ways that are less visible or known.

Thought leadership, vision and principles

As outlined in the Young Feminist Manifesto, girls and young feminists have modelled thought leadership and influenced the vision for GEF, grounded in shared principles of co-design, redistributing power and transformation. The Global Acceleration Plan from UN Women and the Action Coalitions also recognises the tireless work of adolescent girls so far in shaping the process.

Girls and young feminists have:

- Developed and embodied principles of intersectionality, feminist leadership, and transformative design.
- Shifted power through reframing engagement and participation as youth leadership and co-ownership.
- Provided a vision of spaces where transformation can take place e.g. hosting the Young Feminist Unconference[3.] as an example for future conference design.

Process

- Throughout the process, practised co-creation, co-learning, co-leadership, and co-design as a way to influence multi stakeholder advocacy processes differently.
- Used and integrated a power analysis to demonstrate where power is visible in the GEF and where it had been invisible.
- Challenged the formality of spaces and communication by bringing intentional discomfort and a stronger emphasis on interpersonal relationships, practices of care and compassion, and deeper listening.

Governance

- Connected across governance groups and civil society to support a diverse range of movements to be able to meaningfully and strategically influence the GEF process e.g. the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG), Youth Task Force (YTF), Action Coalition Youth Leaders, National Gender Youth Activists (NGYAs), and adolescent girl accountability body.
- Integrated transformative design into the process by building participatory spaces and using inclusive, participatory methodologies.
- Advocated for a girl-specific action in each Action Coalition, which was successful.

CO-CREATION, CO-LEARNING, CO-LEADERSHIP, AND CO-DESIGN AS A WAY TO INFLUENCE MULTI STAKEHOLDER ADVOCACY PROCESSES DIFFERENTLY

- Advocated for and were successful in obtaining a seat for the YTF in the Core Group and its working groups (these were the formal governance bodies for the GEF process).
- Raised awareness of the importance to differentiate between girl/youth-led and girl/youth-focused organisations. This resulted in the policy for each AC for each governance body to have at least two girl or youth-led organisations as co-leaders. In reality, this has not been the case for each – the Technology and Innovation AC has one youth leader.

Action Coalitions

- Mobilised girl and youth-led groups and organisations to apply as AC leaders and AC commitment makers.
- Reopened and rewritten the AC blueprints to ensure girl and youth-led organisations could meaningfully shape them and better step into their leadership. This included providing written feedback on the blueprints and consulting girls and young people on what should be included.
- Designed and hosted adolescent girl dialogues with AC leaders to influence the development of actions and indicators.

Forums

- Held informal spaces before and during forums for girls and young people to connect, influence and strategise in the process.
- Participated actively at the GEF stakeholder engagement modalities; included the curated discussions which were a constitutive part of the GEF stakeholder engagement strategy that brought together a group of select participants to address topics of relevance and will feed directly into the GEF. They also actively participated in the Public Conversation Platform which was a collaborative online space to engage everyday citizens and gender justice advocates in the GEF.
- Conceptualised, fundraised for and hosted the Young Feminist Unconference to set an example for what a participatory and transformative space should look like.
- Made the Forums more inclusive and accessible. When the digital platform for the Paris Forum failed to be

accessible to everyone, particularly those in Asia, young people organised Zoom viewing parties that adults also began to join because they were more reliable than the formal platform.

- Attended and spoke at the Forums in Mexico and Paris, despite not being allowed to stay for the duration of the conference. Girl and youth speakers were also cut off several times during their speeches, unlike adult powerholders.

YOUNG PEOPLE ORGANISED ZOOM VIEWING PARTIES THAT ADULTS BEGAN TO JOIN BECAUSE THEY WERE MORE RELIABLE THAN THE FORMAL PLATFORM

Mobilisation, inclusion, and localisation

- Organised and mobilised across national and regional networks and movements. This included through a large and still growing WhatsApp group and through the Young Feminist Hub, a youth-led online platform, with over 600 young activists.
- Contributed to the design of the GEF Youth Journey process held by UN Women and customised that journey in the different regions.
- More than 300 National Gender Youth Activists participated in monthly meetings and strategised on how to expand the Generation Equality constituency and the localisation of the campaign.
- Participated in, hosted and spoke at countless adult and youth-led and organised meetings, dialogues and events.

Accountability

- Authored or contributed to several girl and young feminist responses and manifestos including Young Feminist Manifesto, Beijing+25 Youth Manifesto, Beijing+25: A Girls' Platform for Action and the Mexican Youth Diagnosis of the Action Coalitions.
- Held governments to account in Africa through national level consultations and dialogues (led by African youth-led organisation, NalaFem).

- Hosted several girl and youth-led accountability sessions including: “How accountability would look like if led by youth.”
- Participated in several UN Women-led sessions on girl- and youth-centred accountability to shape the formal accountability process.
- Consulted girls, youth and their allies on what girl and youth-led accountability should look like.
- Actively engaged and contributed to the UN Women Accountability Working Group.
- Actively shaped and co-designed the Global Fund for Women-supported Accountability Framework (still in process during the time of writing).
- Advocated for limited Private Sector engagement where there were concerns of pink-washing.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT COMMITMENTS SPECIFICALLY TO GIRLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Young feminists and adolescent girls are key drivers for transformative change, despite being significantly under-resourced. Their role and leadership in shaping the GEF process, as well as within wider society, have been emphasised and recognised repeatedly, and by many. Yet, as young feminists keep pointing out, they remain with very little power – within the GEF, as well as within the wider ecosystem. Power, in many ways, directly correlates with the available financial resources. Funding is an important indicator when measuring power and shifts in power in the Generation Equality process. We hope that with this analysis we can contribute to creating some clarity about the funding situation of girls and young people within the GEF and to a real shift in power towards young feminists and adolescent girls, their groups, networks, and collectives and that it will be a call to donors and other stakeholders to “fund young feminists as if they trust them to lead”[4].

CASE STUDY
FUNDING THE GENERATION EQUALITY – YOUTH TASK FORCE (YTF)

BY DAREN PAUL KATIGBAK AND ZAHRA AL HILALY, FORMER YTF MEMBERS

In order to represent young people in all of their diverse and intersectional identities and to facilitate youth leadership and participation in the GEF, the Generation Equality Youth Task Force (YTF) was created. We, the Youth Task Force, composed of 40 youth advocates worldwide, have dedicated our lives to advancing gender equality on the grassroots level. We represent diverse constituencies, including adolescents, LGBTQIA+ youth, young people living with HIV, young people with disabilities, Indigenous youth, Afro-descendants, youth belonging to ethnic, religious, or caste minorities, refugee and migrant youth, health sector professionals, and climate justice activists.

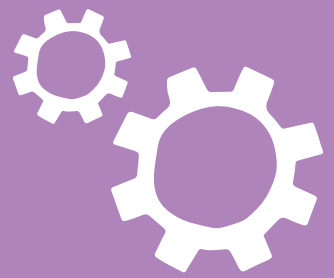
The highest-level decision-making group of the GEF was the Core Group, which comprised the respective Governments of France and Mexico, UN Women and civil society representatives. After a year-long series of intensive dialogues and advocacy with UN Women, member states and civil society, we were able to fight for a youth-seat on the Core Group. Although our inclusion within the Core Group of the GEF held promise, other youth-led organisations, adolescents, and young people encountered difficulties in actively participating in the process. Despite the support demonstrated by UN Women and Member States towards our leadership, there remains an imbalance of power within the GEF and its associated structures. Whilst it has been two-years since the physical gatherings of Mexico and France, young people from the YTF have expressed that their involvement was merely superficial and tokenistic, highlighting concerns about the lack of inclusivity and diversity in various GEF sessions. The manifestation of this tokenism resulted in the YTF ultimately ceasing at the culmination of the Paris forum in July, 2021.

The YTF was established in August 2019, and was involved in all the structures and working groups of the GEF, however, we were only able to use the funds given to us by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation three months before our mandate ended in December 2021. The total amount of grant provided was

$300,000 USD and was equally divided among YTF members, each receiving around $7,500 USD. There were no restrictions provided and flexibility was given in terms of what type of projects and activities we want to pursue. Yet, these funds were only distributed after the physical forums concluded, both in Mexico and France, defeating the main purpose of being used to amplify the work we do on gender equality and for the preparation and conduct of the GEF.

During late 2019 to mid-2021, we were only relying on UN Women through their technical support, with no funding or financial independence. Not only that, despite knowing that the funds were already available in early 2020, exorbitant delays happened because of bureaucracies and unnecessary processes within UN Women. These processes included the barriers in finding external organisations to host the money, undergoing numerous due diligence processes, and finding ways to equally divide the funding across all active members. Although we were able to overcome these barriers, the processes undeniably highlight significant discrepancies in funding designed for young people. The processes of distributing the funding were undeniably rigorous, whereby we were unable to find a third-party host. UN Women were able to find ways to disburse the money directly to us, but we recognise that these lengthy processes resulted in additional barriers for young feminists, including the loss of project opportunity and engagement.

Whilst this process was bittersweet, we cannot forget other young feminists' part of the GEF, who were also unfunded or given the minimal and limited funding available. We cannot forget the National Gender Youth Activists and other young feminists who were strong anchors in co-creating the Young Feminist Manifesto, which highlighted strategies and recommendations to address power imbalances, inadequate resourcing and funding, and lack of transparency and accountability within the GEF. We cannot forget those who worked voluntarily and tirelessly on the grassroots to engage their communities across the GEF. The GEF Youth Task Force was a group of young feminists who held close the stories of other young grassroots feminists.
Together, we navigated a system
that still forgot our voices.



WHAT FUNDING HAS TO DO WITH POWER

Power shows up in many forms; financial resources, contacts and networks (who has access to the process, the funding and the power holders), decision-making (who decides where funding goes and how it is used), agenda-setting (what is being prioritised and discussed, and about which decisions are made), convening power (who is being included and with what roles and powers), and political power (who is setting the agenda), knowledge (of the process and funding system).

POWER SHOWS UP IN MANY FORMS; FINANCIAL RESOURCES, CONTACTS AND NETWORKS, DECISION-MAKING, AGENDA-SETTING, CONVENING POWER, POLITICAL POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

We hope that the analysis and its findings can help shift power to girls and youth in the following ways:

- Making information about the financial commitments more transparent and accessible.
- Creating accountability to girls and young feminists who are part of the GEF leadership.
- Creating accountability to girls and young feminists who are engaged more broadly such as Action Coalition commitment-makers.
- Collecting information about good funding practices and creating awareness among funders about the specificities of girl and young feminist funding.
- Sharing advocacy recommendations, tips and tools related to girl and youth specific funding.
- Creating opportunities for girls and young feminists to access and influence power holders.
- Identifying opportunities to influence grant-making budgets of donors in the coming years of GEF and beyond.

- Creating access to possible funds and, where possible, making available funds more visible and accessible.
- Identifying key obstacles to meaningful girl and youth funding.

> *"We focus on the funder because we know they have all the power. Even Action Coalition leaders, I don't know where they stand in the hierarchy of GEF power. We must highlight that there are really super imbalanced power dynamics, and we need some power right now."*
> Youth activist

WHO IS THIS REPORT FOR?

This is designed for girls, young feminists and their allies who are committed to increasing and improving power and resources for girl and young feminist-led organising in the GEF process to be able to use the findings and recommendations in the report:

- As an evidence base for collective advocacy and communications e.g. write up joint youth statements/manifestos etc.
- To influence funders and funding practices
- To influence other relevant power holders within the process
- To understand which power holders and decision-makers, including funders, might be open to new, innovative, and feminist practices to grant-making for their remaining funds.

DESIGNED FOR GIRLS, YOUNG FEMINISTS AND THEIR ALLIES WHO ARE COMMITTED TO INCREASING AND IMPROVING POWER AND RESOURCES

- To identify new funding opportunities and share these opportunities with their networks.
- To amplify the realities, values, and limitations of the GEF to the girl and young feminist funding landscape.

- To avoid recreating the same hierarchy and power dynamics between girl and youth organisations, groups, and networks.
- To know practically when funding calls and grant cycles take place so they can prepare.
- To develop shared recommendations for flexible and sustainable funds.

A secondary, and vital audience are funders themselves. We encourage funders to use the findings and recommendations to:

- Understand what power they hold in its different forms, and reflect on how they might move from commitment to action in shifting more power to girls and young feminists.
- Learn how to adapt their practices to be more accessible to girl and young feminist-led groups including funding feminist girl, youth and women's funds/intermediaries who are well placed to move resources.
- Commit to more transparency about their funding so that it can be determined how much funding is going to girls and young people, and in what ways – this includes making information and resources more accessible.
- Explore different ways to support meaningful girl and youth engagement in their agenda setting, strategy development and grant-making practices. The toolkit from Elevate Children Funders Group: 'Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funder's toolkit for Child and Youth Participation' is also useful.

FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

We present the findings and insights in two sections; the findings from the desk review, and the insights from the interviews and focus group discussions, and this is partly to show the limitations of what was available online.

FINDINGS FROM THE DESK REVIEW

As expected, a desk review of the financial commitments was not hugely fruitful in answering the research questions. However, it did support assumptions we had and reinforced the need for further research through interviews. A general finding was that, even before analysing the interview data, it was clear that the data in the dashboard was inconsistent, messy, and difficult to decipher. It was also not clear who is responsible for tidying up and analysing the dashboard which would be a first step forward in being able to hold commitment makers to account.

- **Duplication of commitments.** Many of the same commitments were made to multiple Action Coalitions which suggests duplication when commitments were counted. Among others the following commitment makers submitted their commitment to all or several Action Coalitions: Co-Impact, Women That Give, Spain, AGIP, Jumuiya, De Doronos, Egalite Ensemble, Malala Fund, Smile Action International, Vital Voices Global Partnerships, Women Deliver Conference, Jayco MMI, Maklumy Tech, Google, H&M Foundation, Gap Inc, VF foundation, PVH Corp, Woumnia, Clifford Chance, Gavvi the Vaccine Alliance, Vital Voices Partnership, Stichting Mission Lanka, RFSL, and the UN Foundation. This is not a criticism of these commitment makers, but of the unclear process itself to make and track commitments. It is also likely that some financial commitments overlap:
  - Canada's commitment included the seed funding to the Equality Fund. The Equality Fund has committed funding to feminist and women's rights

organisations and funds that also made a financial commitment to GEF.

- The Netherlands made financial commitments through their SDG 5 Fund, which funds Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) and Global Green Grants Fund (GGF), both of which have made financial commitments to fund organisations and initiatives focused on feminist climate justice.

This was further corroborated in the interviews:

> *"All the women's funds are getting resources from other funders, for the most part. I'm not sure if it's a one-to-one overlap. There are probably some resources that are truly unique or not captured twice, but I would say, I think you're right to look carefully at what the women's funds are committing to and ask whether that's being double counted by [a source funder]."* Private funder

➜ **Youth-led vs youth-focused.** Most commitment makers are not differentiating between funding toward youth or girl-led organisations, groups and networks or youth-focused organisations, programmes or projects. While it was impossible to count, we believe that the majority of girl/youth funding is going to girl or youth-focused/serving projects, programmes or organisations.

- Only 46 out of all 396 financial commitments mention youth and/or adolescents, mostly in the combination "women and girls". In many cases it is not clear how much of the committed funding is going to youth/girls and how much to other groups.

IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW MUCH OF THE COMMITMENT WILL END UP WITH YOUTH AND GIRL-LED COLLECTIVES DIRECTLY AS OPPOSED TO INGO-LED PROGRAMMES

- Out of those, only 10 financial commitments mention funding to youth-led or girl-led organisations or collectives. Several have girl or youth-focused programmes but do not do direct grant-making to girls and young feminists and it is not clear how much of the commitment will end up with youth and girl-led collectives directly as opposed to INGO-led programmes. Commitment makers include: The Governments of Ireland, Liberia,

and Sweden, the Ford Foundation, Malala Fund, Plan International, and CARE.

* Only 1 financial commitment maker has committed their entire financial commitment to funding girl and youth-led movements: the Government of Ireland. They, along with Plan International and Purposeful launched the Girls Fund, and committed $996,000 USD to reach girl and youth-led organisations and groups directly.

A note on our process: Many of the blueprint themes that commitment makers made financial commitments to include the phrase "women and girls/youth". If commitments were made to a theme that includes "girls/youth" in the title, but didn't mention girls or youth in the text, we did not count it as a commitment to youth.

- **Funding existing work.** Several commitments include resources for existing funds/initiatives e.g. the Global Partnership for Education or Global Financing Facility for SRHR and additional analysis is needed to understand if any is going to girl and youth-led efforts.
- **Missing amounts.** Not all commitment makers who have made financial commitments have included an amount. This information is especially missing from many of the Private Sector Commitment makers. It is not clear if and how these commitment makers are being held to account.
- **Development programmes vs grant-making programmes.** Many of the financial commitments seem to be more for the delivery of development programmes than potential grant-making directly to movements, though it has not been possible to give exact figures.
- **Time commitment.** Many commitments have not been made over the five-year period of the GEF process. Many have been made only for one or two years. It is not clear what this means for action and resourcing for the Action Coalitions for the last two to three years of the process.

INSIGHTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

"The process could support intergenerational dialogue and help to bridge the generational gap. It could help to encourage groups to identify shared problems, learn about challenges in other communities and work together to tackle them together." Youth activist focus group participant

COLONISATION AS THE ROOT OF ALL FUNDING ISSUES

The funding system for GEF, like the broader funding system for feminist movements, is flawed because of its deep roots in patriarchy and colonialism.

As described by a youth activist who took part in this research,

> *"Colonisation is the key route to tackling these issues. All funding issues are rooted in colonisation."*

We need look no further than the 'projectised' focus of the financial commitments, the US- and Euro-centric powerhouses of philanthropy with Western-led definitions of what constitutes evidence and learning, the Anglophone-centrism of funding applications and processes, and the conscious and unconscious bias of funders who hold the power to decide where funding goes and how.

The systems that have historically excluded oppressed communities continue to do so. Until we build individual and collective consciousness to truly understand how these colonial roots have stemmed and birthed the current system, we will not be able to truly redistribute resources.

This involves moving power away from those who hold it currently and recognising that how and where funding moves should be determined by those leading social justice efforts. Girl and youth activists spoke of:

> *"The importance of learning and unlearning and checking our own biases. We must understand the impact of colonialism in funding processes. We must also understand the different cultural sensitivities in each region to be able to have a truly collaborative funding strategy."*

The current landscape

The funding landscape for GEF is layered and complex, much like the broader landscape

- To reach girls and young feminists, resources often travel through several layers of organisations, each with their own policies and structures. The benefit is that resources can eventually be moved more flexibly. Most of the funding going to intermediaries was not "earmarked". This is positive in that the funding is eventually reaching girls and young feminists through experienced funders, but also means that intermediaries have increased power and responsibility for how funding is distributed. A challenge is that there is a risk of duplication when commitments are counted and tracked.

"On grant-making information, it's both completely the right question to ask and one of the hardest ones to answer because it's truly a little bit different for every institution. For us, our grant-making is done on a rolling basis. We don't have a specific call for proposals. We make grants throughout the year, [including through intermediaries]." Private funder

"We still have to go through intermediaries to reach women's rights organisations, but it is reaching local women's rights organisations quite well. There are a lot of layers to get there so over time, the goal would be to reduce those layers. And in terms of how youth organisations are engaged in that program, we would have to ask." Bilateral funder

"We see ourselves very much as part of an ecosystem." Public funder

"We have another specific stream to fund Feminist Funds. As we mobilise resources [we understand] that there is a whole architecture of human rights feminist funding that is already out there that needs its own support and has its own raison d'etre, and its own networks." Public funder

Little is known about how most funding will be spent.

- Almost every funder we spoke to had yet to create a clear plan for how to meet its financial commitment. Commitments seem genuine in that they align with

"I would definitely be a deep believer that a lot of the 40 billion is genuine and with intent but not yet programmed. There's room for advocacy to go in and shape it and to at least put people on the record about how it gets shaped. I'm excited for what comes next." Private funder

"At the time we hadn't laid out a plan of what every last penny of that would be. It's on a yearly basis, we're seeing what fits under this GEF commitment." Private funder

"I don't think most teams as of today could say 'in 2024 we're going to make this grant to this group.' For most of our commitments, we have some sense of where the money will go in some instances, but I don't think we could say with real credibility, X% will go to youth groups or X% will go to adult-led women's groups or feminist funds. And I suspect that's true for lots of the foundation commitments that were made at GEF. They are aligned at a thematic level, but not yet directly programmed out to partners enough to tell you how much was going to youth partners." Private funder

specific grant-making budgets, but as yet, remain unprogrammed. For many, budgets will be determined each year. Power lies with those who have knowledge of and access to these funders as they will be the first to know about funding opportunities.

Girl or youth-focused (but not led) programmes and initiatives seem to be receiving most funding.

- Several funders spoke of funding large scale, adult-led programmes and global partnerships. This was to be expected, but demonstrates that very little that we know about, is going to girl and youth-led organising and collective action. This is also an indicator of a lack of awareness about the need for a distinction to funding youth-led versus youth-serving organisations and projects. Resources continue to go to adult-led, youth-serving organisations or projects, many of which are large INGOs operating within, rather than challenging, patriarchal and colonial systems of power. Youth-serving organisations are not always working in participatory ways in that their priorities are not necessarily set by young people. They are also rarely political in their framing.

"We have some of our biggest longest partnerships with NGOs [and women's funds] that we've been working with for 10 years. Within those grants are identified grassroots groups around the world that they fund." Private funder

Funders lack dedicated girl and youth-specific strategies.

- Many funders do not have a girl or youth-specific strategy or portfolio but consider girls or youth within their intersectional approach to the funding of marginalised groups. Without a clear strategic home, grant-making programmes can sometimes lack indicators to track dedicated funding to girl and youth-led groups and networks. It results in an assumption that funding has reached "youth" when in fact they had very little say over how funding was used and managed. It also means there is little internal reflection on what accountability and shifting power to these groups means in practice. And it leads to youth funding ending up in adult-led organisations with youth programmes or projects, seeing youth as beneficiaries and recipients of programmes.

"We don't have a specific youth strategy per se or specific goal around youth funding outcomes." Private funder

In terms of disaggregating data, one funder told us:

"I'm afraid it's probably not known. Broadly, I would think that the percentage that would go to youth-led groups over the period will be small but increasing. I wouldn't want to give an estimate for what it might be at the end of the five years, to be honest. A lot of it depends on whether or not we can embed youth in our governance structures in that time, because if we can embed meaningful youth advisory in our governance structures and they are able to make the case and they are able to have some sway over how we spend the funding. Then I imagine that that would lead to quite a big jump in the amount of money that we would be able to disperse." Private funder

Despite this, there is a welcome and exciting willingness to test participatory strategy design, which in turn could influence grant-making.

"The team that I sit in is trying to embed a young feminist lens, and part of that is embedding a meaningful adolescent / youth engagement lens more generally. We are looking at ways to

embed advisory boards that will push staff to consider equity in ways that it doesn't currently do. One of the ways that we might do that is by embedding a young feminist advisory board at the strategy level." Private funder

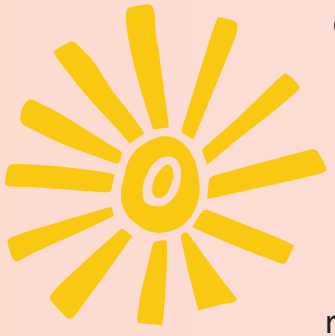
As well as an interest in understanding and funding historically marginalised groups, with an intersectional lens,

"We are, like many women's funds, focused on prioritising those that have been historically marginalised from funding whether it is young feminists, whether it is Indigenous feminists, whether it's LGBT groups." Public funder

Funding practices

(Un)friendly youth funding practices can reinforce inequality.

- Even where there is an interest in being more girl and youth-friendly, funders face practical challenges internally like strict due diligence, compliance or reporting processes. For larger private foundations in particular, it is very difficult to change these processes, due to internal attitudes, board resistance, legal departments working from a risk avoidance and compliance mindset, or limited experience working with informal groups. This is not new information, but the research process reinforced this. Where funders can resource youth-led organisations, it tends to be those with more established structures, which reinforces power imbalances between girls and youth groups.



- Where funding is made available to girl or youth-led organisations, collectives or initiatives, the funding amounts are often small grants, which can be unsustainable. There are very few informal youth-led organisations with paid staff, which is key to making advocacy, lobbying, and activism more influential and impactful. It also leads to a lack of spaces, meetings and conferences convened by youth themselves and a dependency on youth-focused organisations, programmes, and projects to access and influence spaces and convenings.

Limiting funding practices and a focus on project-based outcomes was felt by girl and young feminist groups:

"No one is ready to invest in a movement that is not recognised. No one is ready to invest in a

group that is new. They ask, you're feeding yourself but what are you doing? Then they don't fund administrative costs, just activities not recognising that we are humans. In francophone Africa, the majority of countries are in crisis or conflict. Conflicts on top of conflicts. To be an LGBT group in one of these countries is hard enough and we need core costs to survive." Youth Activist

"People want to fund the most innovative ideas for sexual and reproductive health, for gender based violence etc. but young feminists don't even have funding for existing or for learning together as a movement. People are rushing to fund the next brilliant project to tackle an issue. We should not be an appendage to the funding landscape. Funders should say we want to fund learning, convening, convalescing, self and collective care. The majority are not investing in this" Youth Activist

Funders also spoke of the internal barriers that limit their ability to fund informal groups and provide core funding:

"Certainly, in the short term, but maybe in the long term as well [we plan] to grant directly to small youth-led grassroots organisations, but we are open to going through re-granters. We also do have some direct grants to larger youth-led organisations. A mid-level organisation with a level of formality, we are able to grant to, but we face challenges granting directly to the smaller ones." Private funder

"Essentially, if we want to grant to a value of over a million, we have to get buy-in from our board and our board as yet is not sensitised to meaningful adolescent and youth engagement approaches. And we have work to do to persuade them of its merits and to build up the evidence that we would need. So the tactic that we use is to issue lots of small grants, which can be signed off by the discretion of our CEO who is brought into this agenda." Private funder

"For us, working in a context of government due diligence, although we tried to push that as far as we can, there are audit criteria, about how much money one can give to one organisation depending on their budget size." Public funder

Despite facing challenges, funders are open to learning how to do things differently. Clear action must follow.

- There is scope for collective learning between funders that also takes some burden off girls and young people. Girls and young people have tirelessly contributed time, energy, and free labour to advise funders on what good and meaningful funding practices can look like[5]. We heard and felt a real openness to learning, but girls and young people did not feel that this was met with action.

"[We have] been pretty good about convening other corporate partners and sharing learnings, but [ongoing learning] is definitely something that we should discuss...how we might share with other like-minded [funders] on things we've learned, things that have been successful for us or challenging." Private funder

"We're hearing all the time from our grantees and partners about how to move resources in ways that grassroots groups feel would be better suited to movement building. I think candidly some are much easier to do than others. For instance, we try really hard not to make one-year grants or two-year grants. We really try to make three-year grants." Private funder

"[One portfolio of grants] that we have piloted are identifying and addressing those current barriers to funding and we are developing new systems and mechanisms to fund young activists that may not have had that traditional charitable or registered status. That is part of our commitment to providing core flexible trust-based funding to make funding more accessible to feminist organisations." Private funder

"We haven't set a target for youth-led funding specifically, and, you know, we'd be definitely open to hearing recommendations as to how we should do that." Public funder

CASE STUDY
RESOURCING COMPENSATION AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH GUCCI AND URGENT ACTION FUND

BY XENIA KELLNER, YOUNG FEMINIST EUROPE

Gucci is one of our Action Coalition (AC) 6 co-leaders. They were very engaged throughout the process, showing up interested in the space and asking a lot of questions. They were actively supporting some of the progressive changes that were being called for in the AC. They also released a zine showcasing young feminist activists from the GEF process. Gucci is a private sector funder and they looked specifically into how they could fund feminist movements and organisations. It's not the first time they have done it, but I believe it was one of the first experiences of providing flexible funding.

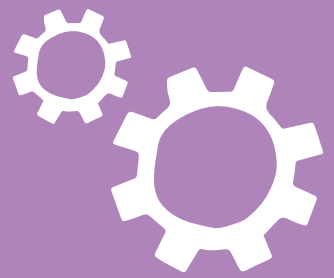
We had an initial conversation and they asked us at Young Feminist Europe how they could support us. We started with a fund of $10,000 USD. It was cool – we could use it however we wanted, there was no reporting at all and no need to tell them how we would use it. For us, it was invaluable because we are entirely volunteer led. We have received small grants before, but always where you had to apply through a long application process. Many applications are not successful and with feedback that is unhelpful or assumes we have access to easy funding. Where we are in Europe, there is not so much funding for young feminist organisations. We are not registered, which is a big issue for accessing funding. Gucci said they usually offer multi-year, so we are receiving another grant this year. Compared to other small grants, it is still not a huge amount – not enough to compensate for a paid position – so it's a relief to not also have to do a report or long application process. We are excited to use this for our registration and governance processes.

With the new funding, we will have an in-person meeting for the first time ever. In five years, we have never actually met as a whole team. The new grant is $15,000 USD this year which we will invest into the sustainability of our structures. We will have external facilitators to help guide us through

conversations on governance and team building. These things have been challenging and exhausting for us as volunteers. This is core to how we work – our feminist values and practices – so we are excited to be able to work on this together. Gucci does not provide accompaniment in their programme, but we are using the funds to do this ourselves, which is great. It is so rare to find funding like this for your work. I was impressed. They had clearly done a lot of work already on trust-based philanthropy, no strings attached and multi-year funding. They were already using this language and practising this. The connections with individuals from Gucci, their appreciation of our work and the trust they showed us, shouldn't go unsaid. They had done a lot of the work in past with legal teams on due diligence etc so that their internal procedures were ready for this type of funding.

When we spoke about how to receive the funding, we realised we needed a fiscal sponsor as they couldn't give the funding to one or two individual accounts. We had reviewed a small Urgent Action Fund grant of approximately $7,000 USD for the GEF-related Young Feminist Hub (a digital network of activists). With that grant we hired two co-coordinators to manage the space. We already knew that UAF was able to fund us through individual volunteers who received the money into their own bank accounts. We asked UAF if they would be a fiscal sponsor of the Gucci grant. They said yes, and in addition, they had residual budget of $17,000 USD and added that to the grant. There was the biggest relief in this gift. We could really compensate volunteers, including communications team members, not just for an hour here or there but for ongoing work. We had conscious conversations about how this would impact power dynamics in the team, like what do you do when funding comes into a volunteer organisation? How do you balance people's availability and interest? It really helped us to learn as a group.

Having someone say we see that you do good work, without having to complete an application, was amazing.



There is some limited but dedicated funding for non-financial support and accompaniment for young activists in the GEF process.

- The process continues to be challenging to navigate. Several funders are interested in supporting girl and youth advocacy. There will be some dedicated funding for convening and joint collective action. The question is, who will manage this funding and what power will girls and young people have to use this funding for their own defined priorities?

"Another focus of one of our commitments, is in collaboration with young feminists, we provide them a platform through [our] digital channels specifically dedicated to social impact. We provide that platform for visibility and dialogue." Private funder

Funding non-financial accompaniment in the process was identified as a priority for girls and young feminists in the focus group discussions who argued that the process is relevant as a space "to help young people be better informed and have access to the information they need to do advocacy and hold governments to account".

There is some promising intention to fund diverse and marginalised communities, but this too must be met with action.

- With some funders, their previous grant-making record demonstrates a commitment to funding diverse groups e.g. previously supporting trans rights activists, Indigenous communities, disabled girls and youth, and young feminists living in crisis contexts. This is limited though and will be particularly important as the GEF process continues and local, national, and regional efforts become even more critical.

"We recognise women aren't a monolith, and experience multiple overlapping sources of oppression. The struggle for gender equality is deeply connected to the struggles for racial justice, queer justice, climate justice and so many other kinds of verticals. We really believe deeply in that intersectional approach to systemic and social change...Some of our grants are reaching young feminists, including trans women and youth really at the local levels as well as other historically marginalised populations including disabled women and girls, and Indigenous women and girls in Latin America." Private funder

The importance of funding diverse and local groups was key for girls and young feminists in the focus group discussion. "Which young people? Are we recreating the same hierarchy and power dynamics?". They also called for targeted funding for "young feminist movements in crisis, war, and disaster settings".

"For us, it means more than just youth focused programming because if an organisation that is self-led by women with disabilities or self-led by Indigenous women tells us that they're also focusing on the rights or leadership of young women, at least there's a component of intersectionality there and we don't have some generic organisation, doing youth programming." Public funder

"What we fund and how we fund is of equal importance. There is the funding, but how do we then show up as a feminist funder? How do we live the feminist funding principles? Making the funding as flexible as possible, as relevant as possible to the needs and priorities and movements themselves. How do we bring an anti-racism, anti-oppression lens to everything that we do? How do we live up to intersectionality in practice? All of that is really key for us." Public funder

Challenges and opportunities

Girl and youth participation versus genuine power shift

- Several private funders are hoping to engage girls and young feminists in their strategic planning and governance. While participatory grant-making is not always possible with large private foundations, other forms of participation, when done meaningfully and not in tokenistic way, could enable girls and youth to influence agenda-setting and decision-making. This must be participation that is grounded in a reflection on where power manifests within a funder's grant-making process and a commitment to shift power through participation. Too often, those engaged in such participatory processes are English speaking, digitally connected girls and youth, further reinforcing colonial-rooted inequality within these spaces. Clear timelines and compensation for these participatory processes will be vital.

"The trajectory will be that the first couple of years of investment under our GEF commitment will not be very good at taking a young feminist or girl-led approach, but hopefully as we move towards the end of it, there will be a much greater proportion of funds that are spent in consultation with girls." Private funder

Girls and young feminists in the focus group discussion asked, “How will marginalised people be able to access the funds? And which organisations will be able to access the funds e.g. girl/youth-led or centred?”

“Donors keep talking about shifting the power, but then this happens through consortiums with global north organisations. So, you still have power dynamics in the programmes and as a youth organisation you need to work with adult partners which can be difficult. There are many requirements working with large adult-led NGOs who hold the grant and there are often problems with payments. Even answering a call for proposals can be very difficult.” Youth activist

Some funders recognised their role and the need for them to think strategically and practically about who to partner with. “We really interrogate our role and our power as part of that GEF commitment in terms of if we are the best vehicle for that funding to come. Who do we need to partner with because we may not be the best positioned to actually roll it out? Not only in the sense of an intermediary but in the sense of value-added. What do groups really need and what fits with their strategies to be successful?” Public funder

Differing funder practices make it near impossible to share practical information on grant-cycles, but transparency of overall budgets is still possible.

➜ Unsurprisingly, each funder we spoke to had a different annual grant-making process. Some have open calls on set dates, but most have a closed, rolling process. It makes it challenging to collate practical timelines and information. However, it is still possible to be transparent with the overall budget each year.

“[The fund] doesn't really have grant cycles that it publicises. We tend to essentially select grantees that are in line with our strategy and approach them with requests or ideas for a specific type of work.” Private funder

“I think in five years’ time some of our money will have gone to youth-led groups and work. Most teams have anchor partnerships that are core to the strategy and most teams feel confident they will make a big grant to these organisations. But for most teams, we do annual grant-making planning cycles where we don't know with a lot of certainty before the year’s planning who will actually receive which grants. It's a lot of back and forth with partners and concept notes, and new partners we haven't yet discovered.” Private funder

There is still a need to make the case for why girls and young feminists should be resourced.

- Some funders did not feel there was enough pressure to make youth-specific commitments. They did not, as a result, feel obliged to do so. For others, it was an obvious choice given their experience funding girls and young feminists. While we do not believe all should be obliged to make youth-specific commitments, making the case for why, and what impact this can have might help those who need to apply pressure with senior leadership and boards.

"A different, or maybe parallel approach, is to build more public noise and pressure about why it's unacceptable that this process didn't fund the next generation of activism and programming and really grow the sense of pressure for every stakeholder involved in the process. If there was this popular sense that you would be laughed out of the room if you show up without a youth focus commitment here, in some ways that's more influential and helpful if it's loud enough and strong enough because it helps give people like me, the incentive and the excuse to go back to my team and say like 'wow guys, we really can't show up at next year's mid-way point without something to say on youth, we need to think about now." Private funder

"You don't hear youth movements, being spoken about and discussed, or the barriers being discussed in the same way as you do feminist movements more broadly." Bilateral funder

Girls and young feminists also felt the unequal pressure to prove themselves worthy of being in philanthropic spaces. "This worthiness isn't required of others." Youth Activist

Funders are finding creative ways to overcome common challenges.

- We were encouraged to hear about the ways that funders were testing creative ways to make their grant-making practices more flexible and grantee-centred. These smaller efforts, often led by committed individuals, are important, but they are limited and are not enough for transformational change.

"We are also trying to do no-strings attached funding. Many [youth] groups don't have the capacity to do reporting, and nor do we. No-strings attached funding means that there aren't requirements for reporting every 90 days, or every year, or providing assets. These things are historically very important to a corporate fund. Especially when working with these smaller groups or just local activists, we have tried to have a no-strings attached approach." Private funder

CASE STUDY
UN FOUNDATION BRIDGE-BUILDING YOUTH FUND (UNF)

BY STEPHANIE OULA AND SIA NOWROJEE

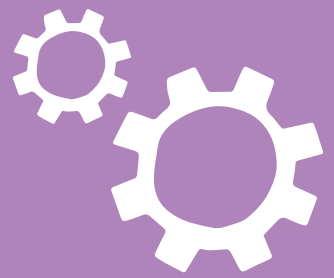
In September 2022, the UN Foundation, UN Women, Girl Up, and Women Win held a pilot bridge-building workshop in New York, with 13 youth leaders and other power holders within the Generation Equality process including philanthropies, private sector, civil society, and international organisations. The workshop centred youth leaders, utilised feminist trust-building methodologies, and aimed to create healing space. The work emerged from many of us being attuned to the challenges and conflict with youth engagement in multilateral spaces, and an acknowledgement that these spaces can be traumatising or re-traumatising for youth activists. Over three days, workshop participants had candid conversations about trust, power, and accountability within the Generation Equality process. A key emerging theme was the need for more and better youth resourcing. Youth leaders expressed frustration and hurt with unpaid expectations of their time and labour in multilateral processes, and with the scarcity of funding available to them.

As an outcome of the pilot workshop, reflecting the calls for increased resourcing for youth engagement, and in line with our existing work on feminist grant-making, UNF piloted a trust-based, autonomous youth-led fund. We felt this was important because: 1) youth leaders need extra support for the important work they are doing, and more resourcing to work effectively together; 2) it was challenging to take the workshop forward without making a concrete resourcing commitment; and 3) by committing seed funding and an intention to grow and learn from the process of this fund, we plan to share our learnings with partners. We believe that the bridge-building youth fund can be a catalytic mechanism to sustain youth advocacy and bridge-building work during and beyond three planned workshops. Each workshop cohort will receive a fund of $50,000 USD; the pilot global youth fund, the African workshop youth fund, and the Latin American youth fund. We aim to grow this fund to a total of $250,000 USD.

For the pilot fund, we expected that the youth would design the funding mechanism and make all resourcing decisions collectively for a wide range of GEF bridge-building activities. However, during the design process, which began in February and is currently still live, some youth leaders indicated that they wanted support and preferred to have design options to choose from, rather than starting from scratch. Our fund accompaniment partners were able to step in and suggest design options and decision-making modalities. The design process for the pilot process is ongoing, and later in 2023, the regional workshop youth cohorts will have the opportunity to design and make decisions around their own respective funds.

This is the first youth funding mechanism of its kind at UNF. This means that we are learning alongside our youth and workshop partners, our possibilities and limitations as a funder. We are fortunate to have the support of the Gates Foundation and have benefited from expert partners in the feminist youth resourcing space, including Women Win, and independent consultants, Georgia Booth and Ruby Johnson. We have been transparent with the youth about what we can and cannot do. For example, UNF cannot grant to an unregistered organisation, has caps on granting to individuals, and may seek other funding partners to meet the needs of youth funding requests.

UNF hopes to learn from the experience of this pilot fund from youth leaders and other partners about methodologies around inclusive and consensus-based decision-making, how they design and structure the funding mechanism itself, and what the impact of the funds will be.



"Typically [the Foundation] doesn't give out core resources, but what we've tried to say is that we increase our overhead percentage. Right now, our grantees can ask for a percentage overhead, which many of them tell us is basically like unrestricted core funding in the end. For some of our grantees we've explored whether we could double that, so that more of their grant can go towards unrestricted grant-making or core needs." Private funder

The potential for influence

There is *some* potential to influence budgets.

- We struggled to get exact figures from many funders on how much will actually reach girls and young people. Funders shared that they were open to input as they design their budgets in the coming years, but both youth and other stakeholders were dubious about this potential for influence. If the opportunity is genuine, there could be power in intergenerational advocacy to make recommendations to funders together.

"We did make an effort to reach out and support civil society organisations within our Action Coalition. Through the grants that we made this year, we are supporting [several AC leaders] as well as some of our existing grantees that are involved in the GEF process. We definitely look to organisations involved. If there's anything we should be aware of in the next six months in terms of ways we can work together, things going on within our Action Coalition or in terms of young feminist movements, we always love to connect and talk about ideas."
Private funder

"One approach is picking off a few commitment makers, and working very methodically hand in glove with them on a nuanced basis of understanding their strategy, understanding their commitments, and working with them to influence their programming."
Private funder

Feminist intermediaries and fiscal sponsors are critical to moving resources to girls and young feminists.

- Several source funders, particularly governments and private foundations, which tend to lack the structures to fund girls and young feminist directly, work with intermediaries and fiscal sponsors who regrant to girl and young feminist groups. This includes youth and women's funds who will play a critical role in moving resources within the $40 billion USD. Hopefully this is in ways that are flexible, accessible, and girl and youth-friendly, but this will depend on the intermediary and cannot be taken for granted. We know that while some women's funds do fund girls directly, it is a very small percentage of their overall budget[6]. The power of these funders, in terms of the resources they can channel, knowledge they hold and access they can grant, cannot be underestimated. Intergenerational collaboration with them, as well as intentional efforts to influence them and their grant-making strategies will be key.
- Some funders emphasised their role as part of a wider ecosystem and stressed that it goes beyond grant-making. It also includes advocating for and influencing current grant-making practices to make funding more accessible to young feminist movements.

"The hard one for us is that legally we can't give money to unregistered groups, at least in our current setup. We recognise, and have heard consistently, that it is a barrier for lots of groups and youth groups in particular. One of the ways we've been trying to rectify this is to fund through women's funds. We see them as much more than just intermediary partners – they're good strategists, first responders. We also think women's funds can play a really important role in moving money to grassroots groups and young movement leaders who may be unregistered, either on purpose or because they just aren't yet able to be registered. Women's funds will continue to play a key part in our strategy."
Private funder

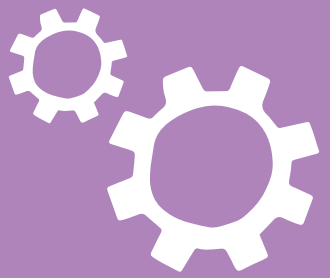
CASE STUDY
PROVIDING FLEXIBLE RESOURCING IN DIFFERENT WAYS TRANSLATION AND RAPID RESOURCING TO ACTION COALITION LEADERS

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PURPOSEFUL

In 2021, around the time of the Mexico Forum, it was becoming clear that there were very stark and immediate funding needs for girls and young feminists who were engaging in the GEF process. Purposeful and Plan International, as part of the collaborative Girls' Fund, pooled a small amount of resources (approximately $20,000 USD) to provide, through Purposeful's existing funding mechanisms, rapid grants to the Action Coalition Youth Leaders, having heard that some had so little, they were not even able to join the AC planning meetings as they did not have data packages or interpretation was not being provided. We shared a very short simple application form with the leaders who could apply for immediate funding. Eight AC Youth Leaders applied, and all received funding. Several have received renewal grants each year since. The Girls' Fund later mobilised approximately $900,000 USD from the Irish government, realised in an annual grant cycle through Purposeful. See page 64 for more information and how to support.

The group of girls and young feminists that were self-organising to develop the Young Feminist Manifesto were, at a similar time, seeking support to translate the document. They were not only facing financial barriers, but also the challenge of not having contacts or relationships with professional translators. Nor could they take on the administrative burden of contracting such a company and managing the process. Purposeful offered to do the translation of the Young Feminist Manifesto, hiring the translation company we used regularly and to manage administrative and financial processes. We were sent the English version of the document and sent back the translated versions.

Adaptive and flexible resourcing does not always have to take the form of a traditional grant. It is possible to provide resources in ways that alleviate or share the administrative or capacity burden felt by young people.



"As you know, government funding comes with all kinds of requirements and all kinds of expectations, and we've all been doing a lot of work over the years to show how that is limiting access of feminist groups to funding young feminists and limiting Indigenous feminist groups doing human rights work more broadly. We've made this commitment in funding, but we've also made this commitment to push the envelope in our work as we work with these governments, and as we move forward on what is possible to make this funding more feminist, more useful, more flexible, more relevant for, in particular, the folks who typically get excluded." Public funder

Young people called on funders to take the time to learn about how young people organise and adapt their funding practices to meet the realities of girls and young feminist groups:

"Philanthropic organisations have been trying to make things so intersectional and serve the underserved, but without really understanding how these organisations work and the challenges that surround them. Funders need to take into account how youth organisations are really contributing to youth movements and fund them according to how they work and organise." Youth Activist

A small number of funders recognise the need to fund young feminist leadership in further shaping the GEF process.

➜ This includes Action Coalition Youth Leaders, youth-led commitment makers, girl and youth accountability, and National Gender Youth Activists. There is also recognition that many groups around the world would like to get involved but do not know how, with limited access to information and resources.

"Over the past five years we really transitioned into funding more movement building, which is why we selected this Action Coalition [6] to begin with, to provide more general core flexible feminist funding. We're still learning, and we probably still have a lot of work to do...In terms of youth specifically, we were able to give some funding [to a young feminist organisation / AC youth leader] and we did that with quite a few smaller groups around the world through a fiscal sponsor in the end." Private funder

Examples of what this could look like:

- Resourcing youth commitment-makers to implement their commitments.
- Funding Action Coalition Youth Leaders to continue to engage in and co-lead their Action Coalitions. This should include salaries/core costs.
- Girl and youth co-leadership in GEF governance including in the Multi-stakeholder Leadership Group.
- Girl and youth engagement in the formal and parallel accountability processes.

The upcoming call for new commitments provides another advocacy opportunity.

- Funders are grappling with how to move resources to girls and young feminists. New commitments provide an opportunity to call for changes to grant-making practices. For those who have already made commitments, we can still influence how they meet and report on them. This must be a collective and intergenerational effort.

Young people are also calling on resources to be able to make and honour their own commitments: *"This whole thing of new commitments, what does it mean for youth? The mid-point of the GEF needs to evaluate whether youth were really in a space to make a commitment. While we encourage new commitments, we need to support youth organisations and movements to do this and provide support for movement leaders. Before you ask for commitments, show your commitment to youth."* Youth Activist

> ***"Sometimes youth activism can be dismissed as – 'well of course that's just youth groups asking for more money for themselves' – so, find some adult allies who agree with this work to be delivering these asks with you."*** Private funder

Many felt that while girls and youth had been called on to make commitments, there was no follow up to support them (unlike the salaried, well-funded INGOs, companies and philanthropic institutions). *"A benchmark for GEF and for all the youth who have been mobilised, is to ask, have they even been supported to make commitments?"* Youth Activist

Moving ahead

Girls and young people have contributed enough to sector learning.

- They are fatigued. The onus is now on funders, UN Women, Action Coalition Leaders, intermediaries, and other stakeholders to come together and move from commitment to real practice change. This must begin with a reflection on what power they each hold; over resources, over decision-making, over agendas, over convenings over access, over language justice, over timelines, over contacts and networks and so on.

"Funders also have a role in influencing other funders e.g. a private foundation will listen to what others are doing. An important part of advocacy is recognising the power held by peers." Youth Activist

In the focus group discussion, girls and young feminists suggested a "GEF Survivor Twitter account" or a "GEF Walk of Shame" comedy event. While brilliant as ideas, these represent the very real trauma that has been inflicted on activists by the process.

They called on funders to start funding with love and empathy.

"How can we add empathy to this world? Empathy is power and being loving is so important. You can't touch it but it's so important." Girl Activist

Power and resources remain held at the global level.

- We heard from girls and young people that localised, democratic decision-making is still missing, and the local relevance of the global commitments is still unknown. In this way, GEF is a microcosm of the broader funding landscape, facing the same challenges and efforts that must be made to move power from the global to the local.

Bureaucracy at the regional and national levels was also a barrier.

"Commitment-makers, funders and governments must take on the task of tackling bureaucracy in their countries. They cannot clap along with commitment at the global level and then go home and say it is too difficult to implement." Youth Activist

CASE STUDY
NALA FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

BY AYA CHEBBI, CO-FOUNDER OF NALAFEM AND FORMER AU YOUTH ENVOY

As youth movements, we're always told to "get organised" when institutions fail to understand the complexity and fluidity of youth spaces. During the GEF process, every time I tried to engage meaningfully, we were told, 'get organised'. This sparked the manifesto idea – one feminist document capturing the demands of young feminists while positioning ourselves in the GEF process as a Continent. Serving as the first African Union Youth Envoy helped position my office as a convener to get the buy-in of the AU as our continental home and the UN as a partner of the AU. This also engaged young women to trust and invest in the process because of its institutional backing, knowing that their voices would surely be heard and translated into policy wins.

Let's remember 2020 was the outbreak of COVID-19, a challenge as mobility would not allow for offline consultations and an opportunity as the GEF process stretched its timeline. We needed the resources to make it happen. A year before, my team had already fundraised for our gender pillar. It might seem like there are "plenty" of funds for gender, feminist work or so called "women's empowerment" but when I knock on doors, very few donors follow through. Even the funds we finally got took a year to release and meet due diligence with multiple back and forth paperwork edits, adjustments, alignments, and log-frames. Sometimes I feel like giving up this process when it becomes draining and taking the time I'm supposed to use for advocacy, but I get the funds over the line to make sure this work continues – it's a dilemma.

We went back to the donors during the pandemic to request re-purposing of the funds into this new experiment. While many did not agree, one private foundation agreed because of a strong relationship we had built around understanding girls' rights in Africa. Those relationships also built around similar frustrations about intergovernmental institutions' processes. Re-purposing was not overnight though, it needed time and justification – another challenge. I decided to implement, to pay for digital tools, translation etc. and was important to work with people eager to jump into action until money arrived.

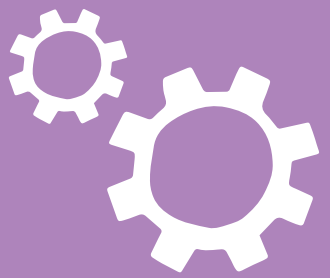
Bureaucracy with donors can really delay the needed action or

change and most of us young feminists have to make the choice to move with personal resources or rally the network of committed people. Even though some good-willed people within foundations wanted to support, their process was stalled, like their inability to sponsor youth delegates to our summit due to pre-agreed rates with the host hotel, and not being able to pay registrations fees at our rate. Trying to find other avenues takes longer, why not fix the bureaucracy in the first place?

After we sorted the resourcing, we structured mobilisation around the manifesto through five regional Barazas (consultations). We invited as many organisations (over 30 partners) as we could reach to facilitate, report, moderate, draft and co-create beautiful chaos. Each organisation committed its own resources to co-host these consultations. We paid for a lead facilitator and rapporteurs and relied heavily on volunteers. This wide partnership resulted in the participation of over 1,500 participants from 44 African countries, leveraging AU convening power and making sure decision-makers (commissioners, ambassadors, policymakers etc) were in these virtual rooms throughout.

Whenever we received feedback in the process of inclusivity, we acted on it. “Engage the diaspora”, so we did. “Provide sign language interpretation” on Zoom, so we figured it out. Our strategy was to employ as many young people as possible rather than professional companies. This reduced the cost, but more importantly, it gave entry-level youth job seeker opportunities, especially during the pandemic. It is shocking how our African youth are underpaid. The sign language interpreter only originally asked for $10 USD to cover her internet bundle. We offered her $100 USD.

After launching the Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Manifesto, I established Nalafem as a Pan-African platform for women leaders to take the manifesto from policy to implementation in member states. Despite showing concrete impact over the past two years, we continue to face challenges in securing funding. Sustainability is a major one – many donors pledge funds that are very attached to their “strategy” and when that strategy changes, the short-term cycles end and are not renewed. Others prefer to make over $1 million USD investment, which we don’t have the capacity to absorb as a start-up venture. (Neither is there funding to actually help us put in place the structures to absorb that amount.) Most donors are looking for policy wins – the question is how, without investing in the frontline changemakers?



UNDERSTANDING THE STAKEHOLDERS

The research process also showed us who the main stakeholders are in the GEF process. We have divided the stakeholders into several groups based on the power they hold and their role in the process.

SOURCE FUNDERS

Funders that provide resources to others to re-grant, including large private foundations and government donors e.g. Gates, Irish Government, Canadian Government, CIFF, Ford Foundation.

Power: Source funders hold financial power, as many have made large commitments and may not have yet planned in detail how those commitments will be spent. Some also hold political power if they are funding formal parts of the process e.g. UN Women coordination, the accountability mechanism etc.

Role: Funding both thematic areas of work as well as formal parts of the process e.g. the development of an accountability mechanism.

GIRL, YOUTH, WOMEN'S FUNDS

Intermediary funds that are most likely to be receiving funds from source funders and re-granting to girl and young feminist groups.

Power: As many source funders do not have the ability to grant directly to girl and young feminist groups, intermediaries are critical to re-grant. This includes Purposeful, FRIDA, and Global Fund for Women.

Role: Participating themselves as Action Coalition Leaders and commitment-makers, engine in collective advocacy efforts and re-granting to girl and youth groups.

UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN agency responsible for the Generation Equality process and coordinating it globally and through its regional and national offices.

Power: UN Women has the power to provide guidance to Action Coalition Leaders and commitment-makers. UN Women also has power with the information it holds on the commitments that have been made and how commitment-makers will be held accountable.

Role: Continuing to coordinate the process, including girl and youth leadership within the process.

ACTION COALITION LEADERS

The organisations, governments, groups and private sector companies that lead each of the six Action Coalitions.

Power: Action Coalition Leaders have political influence in the process as well as the power of networks and contacts, including with UN Women. They also have access to information that others do not.

Role: Action Coalition Leaders are responsible for overseeing the delivery of commitments within their focus area. They also have a role in influencing the process and in supporting meaningful girl and youth engagement within their leadership.

COMMITMENT-MAKERS

The current and future commitment-makers who have made commitments that are aspirational and need to be fundraised for. Commitment-makers include source funders, girl, youth and women's funds, and youth-led organisations.

Power: The power of a commitment-maker depends on who they are and whether they a) have already mobilised resources for their commitment, b) need to do so or c) are a funder that would be providing those resources to other commitment makers.

Where a commitment has not yet been met, there might be potential to influence. Commitment-makers might also have collective power to advocate for more and better resources to meet their commitments.

Role: Commitment-makers' main role is to put into action the promises that were set out for each Action Coalition. There is also a potential role for shared learning and advocacy as the process continues.

GIRL AND YOUNG FEMINIST-LED GROUPS

The groups that are actively involved in the leadership of the GEF process (e.g. Action Coalition Youth Leaders and National Gender Youth Activists), those who are organising and advocating around the Action Coalition areas (e.g. Youth commitment makers) and those that are interested in the process but are not sure how to get involved.

Power: Girls and young feminists hold collective power together to call for change within the process and externally on the Action Coalition themes.

Role: Girls and young feminists are critical to meeting the commitments and delivering Generation Equality. They are holding commitment-makers to account and continue to contribute to the learning and growth of funders, NGOs, and other adult-led organisations, often without compensation.

ALLIANCE FOR FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

A coalition of organisations working to coordinate shared learning, advocacy, and collective action on resourcing feminist movements.

Power: The Alliance has the financial support from several Action Coalition leaders as well as convening power. Depending on the focus of the learning labs, the Alliance has the potential to influence the process.

Role: The role of the Alliance is to facilitate shared learning and advocacy. This is not limited to the GEF process, but it will be a focus. The Alliance will convene learning labs that will provide an opportunity for intergenerational learning and practice change.

GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN

The organisation in receipt of funding to develop a feminist accountability framework, co-created with different groups and organisations who are receiving grants to support their engagement and to lead their own accountability mechanisms.

Power: Global Fund for Women holds financial power as well as convening power. When the accountability mechanism has been developed, it will also be a powerful tool to hold commitment-makers to account.

Role: The role of Global Fund for Women is to convene the co-creation group that will lead and design the accountability mechanism. They have committed to build on the existing efforts from girls, young feminists, and broader civil society.

THE GIRLS FUND

This refers to the dedicated funding mechanism that Purposeful created with Plan International. It is managed through Purposeful's With and for Girls Fund and was launched with funding from the Irish Government. It has the potential to move more resources in ways that are flexible and girl and youth friendly.

Power: The Girls' Fund has the power of networks and contacts: it is connected to the With and for Girls Collective which is a network of funders housed within Purposeful. It has some financial power though it aims to mobilise more resources through the GEF process to move to girl and young feminist-led groups.

Role: The role of the Girls' Fund is to move resources to girl and young feminist groups in ways that work for them – flexible, direct and with grantee-centred accompaniment to complement the financial resources.

GLOBAL CSOS/NGOS

Several global CSOs and INGOs are commitment-makers. Their commitments focus explicitly on girls and young feminist-centred programming and resourcing. Given their role as programme implementers, they also tend to be on the receiving end of large grants from governments and private donors.

Power: Global CSOs and INGOs have financial power, trusted with large programme grants from source funders, and sometimes acting as a channel for funding to girls and young feminists. They also have access to knowledge and contacts in government and philanthropy, meaning they have advocacy power to push for change from these actors.

Role: The role of these organisations is to design and implement programmes in line with their commitments. They have a potential role as allies in advocacy.

GOVERNMENTS

As above, they often act as Action Coalition leaders, commitment-makers, and funders. They also have a role in setting local laws that prevent or enable girl and young feminist organising, advocacy and resources.

Power: Governments have the power to set or lift laws that restrict; the movement of international funding into countries, high fees for international funding, whether an unregistered group can receive funding, and whether groups can organise and assemble (keeping civic space open or closed). These laws are often age-restricted e.g. under 18's not being able to own bank accounts or receive foreign money.

Role: The role of Governments is to set and implement these laws. They are a potential target for collective advocacy.

FUNDER NETWORKS

Some funder networks are commitment-makers e.g. Prospera, the network of women's funds. Other networks are made up of funders that are AC Leaders or commitment-makers e.g. With and For Girls, Human Rights Funders Network, Elevate Children Funders Group, Philea.

Power: Funder networks have the power to be spaces for donor advocacy for attitude and practice change. They also set definitions and standards e.g. standardising application forms or agreeing standards for reporting.

Role: The role of funder networks is to encourage learning and action on different areas of work or if member share a focus population e.g. children or women. Funder networks tend to be places specifically for funders, so they are free to talk openly and honestly, creating real space for identifying and overcoming shared barriers.

GEF YOUTH COMMITMENT MAKERS

In this section we share some examples of the Youth Commitment-makers. UN Women undertook initial analysis of the commitments by youth-led organisations and initiatives. The analysis shows that 324 commitments were made by 150 organisations that defined themselves as youth-led. However, a first glance at the organisations suggests that several seem to be youth focused, rather than youth-led e.g. World Association of Girls Guides and Girl Scouts, Breaking Silence Movement and the Centre for Social Policy Development (CSPD).

This is a challenge with a self-labelling approach, but also suggests, from some commitment-makers, a limited understanding of how and why to differentiate between youth-led organising and youth-focused organising. There is also nuance and complexity as some girl and youth-led groups were born out of adult-led groups and organisations, but are now or have always been semi- or completely autonomous e.g. Girl Up Peru and Venezuela. We have included these in the list. Deeper analysis of the youth commitments is not within the scope of this analysis, but we wished to share details of which commitment-makers we knew or believed to be girl or youth-led.

If you are a girl- or youth-led group and you are not on this list, please let us know so we can update it!

Africa

- Association des Jeunes Leaders pour le Développement (Burundi)
- Black Womxn Caucus (South Africa)
- Digital Grassroots (regional)
- Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Togo (CNJ-Togo)
- Fondation des Jeunes Amazones pour le Développement (Benin)
- Girls for Climate Action (Uganda)
- Girls Community (Congo)(Technology and Innovation AC leaders)
- Initiative for Rights and Gender Equality (Nigeria)

- Manki Maroua l'association des filles mères pour un avenir meilleur (Cameroon)
- Nala Feminist Collective (regional)
- Organisation of African Youth (Kenya)
- Trans Alive Initiative (Uganda)

Middle East and North Africa
- NAFAS (Tunisia)

Latin America and the Caribbean
- Anyar Anmar (Panama, AC leader Economic Justice and Rights)
- Coalición Feminista Universitaria (Ecuador)
- Efecto Latam (Ecuador)
- Girl up Perú
- Girl up Venezuela
- Federación Mujeres Jóvenes
- Juventud Unida en Accion (Venezuela, Bolivia)
- Kisisqa (Peru)
- Red Las Niñas Lideran (Guatemala, Gender-Based Violence AC leader and adolescent girl-led)
- Tejiendo Pensamiento (Colombia, AC leader Feminist Climate Justice)
- Tremendas (Chile)
- Uno por Ciento y Más (México)

Asia Pacific
- Hibiscus Foundation for Social Welfare (India)
- Menstrual Talk (Pakistan)
- One Future Collective (India)
- The Queer Muslim Project (India)
- Trust for Youth and Child Leadership (India)
- YP Foundation (India)
- YWB: The Association for Youth Wellbeing
- Yuwa (Nepal)

Europe
- Federacion Mujeres Jovenes (Spain)
- Choice for Youth and Sexuality (Netherlands)
- Génération Maastricht (Belgium)
- Grabbing Back
- The Kite Trust (UK)
- Stolen Dreams (UK)
- Young Feminist Europe (regional, Feminist Movements and Leadership AC leader)

Global

- Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network
- Fridays for Future
- Global FFF MAPA
- International Federation of Medical Students Association
- International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
- Joint Youth Working Group on SRHR and Climate Justice
- Movimiento Internacional de Juventud
- Major Group for Children and Youth
- Youth Against Slavery Movement
- Youth Coalition for SRHR

Details can be found in the UN Women's Summary Report of the analysis of commitment by youth-led organisations. To find out more about the commitments of youth-led organisations, networks, collectives and initiatives to the GEF, you can take a look at the dashboard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section brings together recommendations for funders, girls, and young feminists and other GEF stakeholders. These build on existing recommendations from the Young Feminist Manifesto[7]. If you are advocating in the GEF process, see what is relevant and useful for your own advocacy. Recommendations to UN Women are contained in a later, dedicated section.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND DONORS:

Working through intermediaries

- If you are not able to fund girl and youth-led groups directly, work with girl and youth-centred funds that are in a position to fund in more girl and youth-friendly ways (more flexible, core funding, fund informal groups). This includes but is not limited to:
  - With and for Girls Collective/Girls' Fund
  - FRIDA Young Feminist Fund
  - MamaCash
  - Global Fund for Women
  - Global Fund for Children

More and better funding

- Allocate a percentage to girls and young feminists within your financial commitment, and differentiate between funds to girl and young feminist-led organisations, networks, movements and youth-centred or youth-serving organisations etc.
- Cleary categorise the type of girl/youth funding you provide and collect data about it including what funding is for projects vs core funding.
- Before granting funds to youth-serving organisations, ask yourself if there might be a girl or youth-led group or organisation that might be better placed to lead on

implementing the work. Remember that in most cases, there will be, and that you may just not have them within your network. Reach out through partners and collaborators to map girl and youth-led groups and networks. Use the list of networks in the Resources Page at the end of this report. Set up a virtual coffee with a girl or youth-led group to begin to build your own relationships.

- In addition to flexible and core funding, provide grantee-centred support and accompaniment, including support on governance, organisational development, registration, infrastructure, and other ways to invest in sustainable organisations.
    - The Global Resilience Fund's approach to accompaniment[8] may be useful to learn from.
- Address and change internal funding policies and practices that make funding difficult to access for girl and youth-led groups. Rules, norms, and practices are also a way to hold up existing systems and structures of power. This can include compliance regulations, formal or informal laws, regulations about accountability, reporting, control, and trust. Reflection on this can be part of the internal commitment to participate in a transformative process.
- Integrate a power analysis in your girl and youth funding strategies[9]. Ask in what different ways you can shift power to youth. Reflect on what additional power imbalances exist for adolescent girls under 18, who face additional legal restrictions in accessing resources and may face heightened safeguarding challenges.
- Consider co-designing grant-making strategies with girls and young feminists so they can truly influence your priorities and have power over where funding goes.

CONSIDER CO-DESIGNING GRANT-MAKING STRATEGIES WITH GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINISTS SO THEY CAN TRULY INFLUENCE YOUR PRIORITIES

- Don't assume that girl and young feminist-led groups and organisations only work on youth-focused issues and projects. Young feminists are thought leaders on many intersecting topics with ever dynamic and responding agendas.

- While specific calls for applications for girl and youth-led organisations can be a good practice, it can also have the opposite effect if you don't consider youth-led organisations equally for other grant opportunities. Consider including a quota for youth-led grantees within other funding calls.
- Grants to girl and youth-led organisations are in many cases very small grants. This is welcome by some but can also be a burden. Where needed and possible, increase the amount of funding to girl and youth-led organisations.

ACTIVELY SEEK OUT FEMINIST FUNDERS THAT ARE DOING THIS WORK WELL TO LEARN FROM THEM – BE OPEN ABOUT YOUR VULNERABILITIES AND AREAS FOR GROWTH

Knowledge and information

- Collect and share age disaggregated data, for more transparency on girl and youth funding.
- Make grant-making cycles more transparent by providing a clear calendar or instructions on your process. At a minimum, be transparent about your annual budget and whether this will be channelled via intermediaries. Ideally, be proactive about finding and reaching girl and young feminist-led groups, networks, and organisations.

Learning

- Join spaces for peer-learning and strategy sharing with other funders on how to make more core and flexible funding towards girls and young feminist-led groups. Join funder collectives and collaboratives, and actively seek out feminist funders that are doing this work well to learn from them. Be open about your vulnerabilities and areas for growth.
- Recognise that capacity strengthening and partnership is a two-way street. Explore with grantee groups what you can do to improve and strengthen your internal structures and policies.
- Where possible and appropriate, being mindful of fatigue and unpaid labour, and consult girl and young feminist-led groups and organisations instead of only youth-focused and serving organisations to learn about

good practices on youth leadership and engagement. Recognise girls and young people as thought leaders and experts, not just on youth specific themes.

- Learn more about the specifics and good practices in young feminist funding. Explore existing learning communities such as the Participatory Grant-making Community of Practice, Alliance for Feminist Movements and We Trust Youth Initiative.
- Girls and youth advisory boards/groups can be a good step, but ensure they are not tokenistic and are equipped with real agenda setting, decision-making and financial power. Allow sufficient time for participatory processes, share those timelines well in advance, and hire girl and youth engagement experts to lead or support and pay them fairly.

Young feminist and adolescent leadership within the GEF process

- Ensure there is enough funding going to girl and youth-led organisations to have paid staff to lead on important aspects of the GEF process, especially on defining the transformative process and accountability process. Make funding for these processes available in a form that is not led by UN Women alone, but co-led by a variety of stakeholders, including girls and youth. This will help to decentralise power and redistribute it more equally.
- When funding organisations that are responsible for delivering formal elements of the process (including but not limited to UN Women), include a condition for them to plan for and support meaningful girl and youth participation and leadership. This should include providing compensation for their time and efforts.
- Provide funding for the coordination, mobilisation, and alliance building efforts of girl and youth leaders. Girl and youth leaders in the GEF have done a tremendous amount of work in mobilising youth commitment-makers. Funding for them to better coordinate these efforts independently would be strongly advised.
- Provide grants that allow for more girl and young feminist-led convenings, alliance building, conferences, and movement building. Convening power is closely interlinked to who is seen as a power holder with agenda-setting power. When providing funding to adult-led forums claiming to be youth-serving, consider directly funding dialogues, conferences or fora that are designed and led by girls and youth themselves.

These recommendations draw from the analysis that we conducted. There is a wealth of recommendations from others in the sector which can be found in the following resources:

- CIVICUS: Resourcing Playbook
- FRIDA and MamaCash: Girls to the Front
- FRIDA: No Straight Lines
- Plan International: Pathways to Partnering with Youth-led Organisations

RECOMMENDATIONS TO OTHER GEF STAKEHOLDERS:

Alliance for Feminist Movements

- Commit to hosting or supporting a Learning Lab on young feminist funding or funding to informal groups more broadly, with a strong intersectional and age lens.
- Commit to institutionalising at least one girl or young feminist-led group in the steering group.

Global Fund for Women

- Continue to ensure girl and young feminist-led groups are included in the co-design group and continue to be involved as it is implemented.
- Continue to recognise and build on the past vision, work ,and recommendations from girls and young people on accountability.

Action Coalition Leaders

- Act as co-leaders, co-conspirators and allies, and push for more funding and accompaniment for girl and youth-led groups and organisations.
- Recognise that the girl and youth leaders you work with will likely not be salaried staff or working a '9–5' job. Be flexible and open to working differently.
- Step into the GEF process and your co-leadership role, not out of it. This is a five-year process and transformation happens gradually. How you practise leadership, commitment, and shifting power is key to its success.

CONSIDER CO-DESIGNING GRANT-MAKING STRATEGIES WITH GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINISTS SO THEY CAN TRULY INFLUENCE YOUR PRIORITIES

A SPOTLIGHT ON UN WOMEN

Given the critical role UN Women has played in setting up and coordinating this process, this section is dedicated solely to the findings and recommendations related to their role, power, and potential. In particular, it welcomes the efforts of the UN Women youth team, to engage girls and young feminists in the process, while noting the challenges and limitations overall.

FINDINGS

- **The power and the role.** UN Women has played a critical role in co-ordinating and convening the GEF process and setting standards and policies. It has also been responsible for building a governance structure consisting of multiple bodies to explore new collaboration models across multiple stakeholders. While decision-making power was better shared and distributed as a result, agenda-setting and convening power, as well as resources and access to funding, information, networks, and power holders mostly lay with UN Women and were not always distributed equally. As initiators and conveners, UN Women also held power over timelines, which often left other actors in the process in a reactive rather than proactive role, and with a feeling of being left behind and overwhelmed.

> *"We saw this with women's groups as well who felt – 'this is a fast-moving train?' – and they couldn't quite keep up or get enough information about the process to know how to influence it. It was like flying the aeroplane as we were building it."* Private funder

- **Vision and mission.** UN Women held power over defining the vision and mission of the GEF, putting an emphasis on the core role of young people being in the driving seat of the GEF. This laid a welcome foundation to enable young feminist leadership in the process, underlined by the establishment of the GEF Youth Task Force. As we have seen outlined in the Young Feminist Manifesto, the success of these efforts has been mixed. While efforts,

primarily championed by individuals within the Youth Team at UN Women, are welcome, the delivery has not always been truly meaningful and inclusive (nor properly funded). More recently, the Youth Team conducted their own analysis of the youth-focused commitments, which surfaced similar findings to those captured in the desk review for this report.

- **Funding girls and youth.** UN Women is not currently equipped as an intermediary to fund youth. After the difficult and challenging experience of girls and young people to access funding through UN Women, some donors are coming to the conclusion that intermediaries are better placed to fund youth groups. This practice is recommended as it creates more co-ownership over the process, thus increasing the power of girls and young feminists. Others though, plan to continue funding UN Women and youth leadership efforts as part of that.

  "We are just about to give some core funding to UN women for the GEF process, and we've included supporting youth participation. We hope that will end up in some kind of direct resourcing of youth via UN Women." Private funder

- **Broader funding to UN Women.** There was an interest by youth and other stakeholders to get a better understanding about the funding going to UN Women. Both funders and young people spoke about internal procedural challenges, lack of communication between departments and limited fundraising success from UN Women for GEF coordination and youth engagement initiatives.

- **Setting standards.** There was a feeling among donors and youth that the rhetoric on meaningful girl and youth engagement and leadership was not always reflected in the policies, processes, and standards that were set for the Action Coalitions and commitment-makers.

  "I don't ever feel like there was actually an explicit ask for everyone to make a commitment to have X percent be youth-focused commitments or that the point of GEF was to be about raising money for youth-led causes. This is where I have the most empathy for youth

activists. The mis-match between the rhetoric and the framing of GEF versus what UN Women actually asked the commitment-makers was huge. I can't say we ever felt pressure from the formal process to explicitly have youth focused commitments." Private funder

AVOID GATEKEEPING AND, INSTEAD, USE YOUR POWERS TO INSTEAD SHIFT POWER DIRECTLY TO GIRLS AND YOUTH

Our overall recommendation to UN Women is to reflect on what role they play in shifting power to young feminists and adolescents, and what it means for resourcing and fundraising strategies.

There is a need to move from ego to ecosystem awareness. What role does UN Women and its youth programme, department, and strategy play as part of the wider ecosystem and how can they ensure that power is shifted to adolescents and young feminists?

STEP IN/STEP BACK

- **Advocate for funding to go directly to girls and youth.** Don't compete over funding with girl and youth-led organisations, collectives, or networks. Ask yourself when things are better placed to be led by girl and youth groups and when they should be led by UN Women. Where can UN Women help facilitate connections and relationships between girls, youth, and funders directly? For example:
  - When it involves convening of girl and youth groups, networks, and movements.
  - When it requires girls and youth to set the agenda, make decisions, and co-create together.
  - When it involves funding that could be directly channelled to girls and young people.
- **Open access to decision-making spaces.** Avoid gatekeeping and, instead, use your powers to instead shift power directly to girls and youth, including agenda-setting power, convening power, decision-making power, access to power holders, networks, political power, and information.

- **Co-create your girl/youth-strategy and associated fundraising priorities.** Work directly with Action Coalition Youth Leaders, the NGYAs and other girl and youth activists to identify what they do and do not need from UN Women. This might include:
  - Administrative, logistical, and inclusion support like interpretation, Zoom accounts, data packages, work spaces, laptops, note-taking, and compensation for time.
  - Coordination of, and compensation for the AC Youth Leaders and other girl and youth groups. This might involve coordination sitting outside of UN Women.
  - Shifting convening power to youth. Instead of organising and convening youth conferences, forums, events yourself, let them be organised by youth-led groups and support them with logistics, access to power holders, governments, and other stakeholders.
  - Reflecting on the role of UN Women-convened youth and adolescent girl groups and their relationship to broader young feminist movements, groups and collectives. Youth advisory groups to UN Women could be convened, coordinated, and self-selected by global youth movements, like other CSO groups. Many challenges the Youth Task Force experienced in comparison to the Civil Society Advisory Group were that it was convened and selected by UN Women. It created uncertainty about their role, powers, and independence. This issue also applies to the National Gender Youth Advocates, who remain uncertain about their role, responsibilities, and powers. UN Women can still play a crucial role and support the youth groups in making their advocacy and organising more impactful.
  - Asking funders to provide funding for these groups directly to girls and youth, instead of towards UN Women.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ANNUAL SURVEY

- **Collect youth-specific data** that will give us information about young feminist funding in the GEF. For example, the annual survey for reporting and accountability of stakeholders should measure improvements in flexible

funding directly going to girl and youth-led organisations, collectives, and initiatives, and on how power is shifting in other ways.

- **Clean and update dashboard data and commitments** in general, but more specifically those made under "youth-led" commitments, to get a clearer picture which of the commitments made under this category are made by youth-led organisations or initiatives and which are youth-focused projects or initiatives.
- **Increase pressure on leaders and commitment-makers** to make youth-specific funding commitments.
- **Define and design the transformative process** in collaboration and co-creation with other Action Coalition Leaders and stakeholders and ensure leaders and commitment makers can report against it.

> *"Civil society and youth activists were clear in their demands, but I don't think those demands were then translated into the formal requirements and process. There was a disconnect there."* Private funder

POWER AND TRANSPARENCY

- **Give more power to your staff working with girls and youth.** Contributions from girls and youth can really influence agendas and decision-making if this power is shared. Otherwise, young people feel tokenised and unmotivated when they develop recommendations that will have no impact because they are not being seriously considered by senior management staff.
- **Create transparency about the role, powers, and responsibilities of the new GEF multi-stakeholder body and its relationship to the Action Coalitions.** Be clear about how it was decided upon and who held that decision-making power. Some have voiced concerns that the body has been established as a fundraising mechanism for UN Women or the group itself. If it plays a fundraising role, it is recommended that funding efforts focus on the Action Coalition leadership and definition of the transformative process.
- **Communicate internal limits, obstacles, and challenges to co-creation and collective efforts transparently.**

THE GIRLS FUND

WHAT IS THE GIRLS' FUND?

The Girls' Fund was launched in 2021 as a collaborative fund with nearly $900,000 USD from the Government of Ireland, to be re-granted over five years. The Girls' Fund is a **participatory mechanism** putting power into the hands of girls and young feminists. Learning, accompaniment, and reporting are led by the grantee groups. We have heard from them that there is a need for more flexible resources, support to build networks and connections, strategic collective advocacy and movement building and access to the GEF decision-making spaces that remain critical. Unfortunately, the Girls' Fund – being the only fund that is purely dedicated to resourcing girls and young feminists during the Generation Equality Process – was only able to resource 6% of applicants due to the limited amount of funding available. These also tend to be small grants of $5,000 USD.

Recognising the urgent need for funding of girl and youth leadership and organising in the GEF process in the first half of 2021, and while waiting for funding to arrive from the Government of Ireland, Purposeful and Plan International moved rapid resources to two regional youth networks in Latin America that were organising consultations with girls and young feminists. They also invited Action Coalition Youth Leaders to apply for rapid grants. Eight groups applied and were granted funding.

The Girls Fund Year 1

The Girls' Fund supported 28 girl-led groups globally in its first year. All successful groups had decision-making power, reviewing, and evaluating blind applications. Selected groups are working on everything from disability rights to trans rights and sexual and reproductive health rights through to climate change. They are working in conflict zones, in dangerous political contexts, and in environments hostile to women, girls and the LGBTQIA+ community. They have a range of different strategies to engage with the Generation Equality process. Some are already influencing through the Action Coalitions, others are advocating with the civil society working groups, at the community level and on national committees.

The selected groups have a diverse geographic representation globally. 46% of the groups are based in Sub-Saharan Africa; 25% are in Central and South America; 11% are from South and Central Asia; 7% are from Europe; 4% are in the Middle East and North Africa; and 4% have a global reach. Groups are also diverse in their leadership: 42% of these groups are led by girls aged 19 or younger; 21% are led by or focused on people with disabilities; and 32% are led by Indigenous young people or young people from cultural or ethnic minorities.

For interested partners, we can also share a more detailed report, including learnings from year one. Please contact: Liesel@wearepurposeful.org

FOR GIRLS AND YOUTH

With funding from the Government of Ireland, the Girls' Fund ran its first round in 2021, aiming to run annual grant cycles. The grant cycle in 2022 was delayed, but in 2023 there are two cycles to make up for this, with changes to the grant amount and openness, based on learnings from the first year.

February 2023

- The grant size increased to $7,000 USD.
- Several groups from the first cycle had their grants renewed.
- There were also travel grants for current grantees for the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York.

October 2023

- Following the suggestions from this report, funding in this round looks to fund girls and young feminists that are actively involved in the process.

The grant cycles run in parallel to an ongoing accompaniment process that is being defined with and for grantees. It includes networking and advocacy opportunities as well as peer learning dialogues. It builds on Purposeful's

accompaniment approach that is rooted in a relationship of solidarity and respect that trusts everyone's capacities, experiences, and knowledge and creates space to communicate with each other to discuss, reflect, and solve problems.

FOR FUNDERS AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Are you interested in contributing to the Girls' Fund? We would love to hear from you. Partners will be resourcing girls and young feminists in a flexible, participatory way. Partners also have the opportunity to join a learning space with other funders and benefit from a shared documentation process. To read the Partner Proposition, please contact liesel@wearepurposeful.org

APPENDIX

Follow this link to the report methodology and analytical approach.

Notes

1. We intentionally use these terms instead of 'engagement' or 'participation', following the recommendations set out in the Young Feminist Manifesto.

2. Booth, G., Johnson, R., Abagun, O. and Chakma, Trimita (2022) 'Weaving a Collective Tapestry', Elevate Children Funder's Group, page 14. Available here: https://static.showit.co/file/urRMy20KS_uG7KttsEak3w/145396/weaving_a_collective_tapestry_ecfg_child_and_youth_participation_toolkit.pdf

3. A visual recording by Sonaksha can be found here: https://www.sonaksha.com/young-feminist-unconference

4. A quote from Young Feminist Europe to Action Coalition 6.

5. Many of these resources are included in the Resources Page at the end of this paper

6. Resourcinggirls.org

7. GEF Young Feminist Manifesto: https://www.youngfeminist.eu/2021/03/young-feminist-manifesto/

8. Global Resilience Fund (2022) 'Sprouting our Collective Wisdom'

9. Purposeful 'Building Girls' Power': https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/building-girls-power.pdf

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Celebrating 5 years
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