



**New Perspectives, New Solutions**  
Funding Organising Led by Girls and  
Young Women

# New Perspectives, New Solutions

## Funding Organising Led by Girls and Young Women

*Written by Lydia Holden, Kahani Communications*

### The Community of Practice

A Community of Practice (similar to a learning cohort) of women's funds supporting girls' and young women's groups (formal or informal organisations created and run by young women and girls) was developed in 2011 by the international women's fund Mama Cash and a women's fund based in Central America, Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, with the support of the Nike Foundation. The Community of Practice (CoP), comprised of 11 women's funds from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, provided an opportunity for the funds to learn from each other, improve their practices to better respond to the needs of young women and girl-led groups and change the funding landscape to make it more accessible to young women's and girls' human rights groups globally.

### What are Women's Funds?

Women's funds are public foundations that aim to support and fund women-led solutions to the root causes of social injustice. Mama Cash, as the first international women's fund, has played an important and active role in the promotion and support of a growing number of women's funds around the world. Mama Cash believes that a strong global architecture of women's funds is a key strategy to building powerful, effective, and sustainable women's rights movements in all corners of the globe.

### Community of Practice Members

**filia.die frauenstiftung**, Germany

**Fondo Alquimia**, Chile

**Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres**, Nicaragua

**FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund**, Global

**HER Fund**, Hong Kong

**Mama Cash**, The Netherlands

**Mediterranean Women's Fund**, France

**Mongolian Women's Fund**, Mongolia

**Reconstruction Women's Fund**, Serbia

**Ukrainian Women's Fund**, Ukraine

**Urgent Action Fund-Africa**, Kenya

### Young Women Interviewed

Po Yee "Bowie" Lam, founder and director of Teen's Key, Hong Kong; grantee partner of HER Fund

Kitman Irene Lam, executive committee member of Teen's Key, Hong Kong; grantee partner of HER Fund

Oksana Dekhtiariova, director of Luhansk Youth Regional Collaboration Center, Ukraine; grantee partner of the Ukrainian Women's Fund

Oksana Kvitka, young woman partner of the Ukrainian Women's Fund

Rudo Chigudu, Katswe Sistahood staff, Zimbabwe; Urgent Action Fund-Africa grantee partner (quotes from a 2011 and 2012 filmed interview)

*This report draws from annual and evaluation reports prepared by CoP members. Quotes and examples from these internal reports were used for this publication.*

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendation 1: See Girls As Partners</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Recommendation 2: Embrace New Approaches</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Recommendation 3: Grow Inclusive Networks</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Recommendation 4: Invest in Research</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Recommendation 5: Fund Capacity Building</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendation 6: Make M&amp;E Systems Accessible</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Recommendation 7: Build Bridges to Other Donors</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>15</b>



# Introduction

From dusty villages in Kenya to urban centres in Mexico, teenagers and twentysomethings across the world are organising, setting up feminist groups in community centres, schools, universities and online, running campaigns against child marriage, while also petitioning for better sex education. The United Nations estimates that youth currently account for approximately one billion of the world's population and that one person in five is between the ages of 15 and 24. This generation is determined to change the world: They are motivated to build inclusive movements that address race, class, ability, and gender.

Recent years have seen greater attention to issues affecting girls in development sectors, but adolescent girls and young women still continue to struggle to access funding to support their activism. While the enthusiasm to enact change by forming their own action groups is there, the funding landscape for girls is sparse: the World Bank estimates that less than two cents of every dollar spent on international aid is specifically directed towards adolescent girls.

In order to increase awareness of the importance of funding girls' and young women's groups, and to create new models for supporting their activism, Mama Cash and the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (Central American Women's Fund) set up a Community of Practice (CoP) in 2011. "We saw an opportunity to bring together peer funds to collectively learn and channel more and better resources to girls' and young women's groups. The Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres was an important partner as they are a pioneer in participatory grantmaking and resourcing young women's rights organising," says Nicky McIntyre of Mama Cash.

As Carla Lopez of Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres shares, "our aim as a fund is to promote the active, visible and recognisable participation of young women in society; this contributes to dynamism within movements."

Supported by funding from the Nike Foundation's Grassroots Girls Initiative,

the CoP was comprised of 11 women's funds from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Mama Cash and the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres jointly coordinated the CoP for three years, from July 2011 to March 2014, with a total budget of €150,000 (€50,000 per year).

The CoP provided an opportunity for funds to learn from one another, to make their practices more responsive to the needs of girls and young women and to shift the funding landscape so that it is more accessible to girl- and young women-led organising across the world. The CoP met yearly with groups of young women activists to discuss and share ideas, strategies and best practices for supporting young women and girl-led groups.

"When young people work together in groups, they learn to challenge power, they gain practical political skills, and begin to envision cultural, educational and political alternatives. You learn, you are challenged, and you are inspired because you realise that transformation of daily injustices is possible," comments feminist activist and Mama Cash board member Perla Vasquez. "Youth groups also keep bringing in new people; as a result, [they] stay relevant and inclusive."

## Community of Practice Goals:

- Bring girls and young women to the table when conducting grantmaking and project planning.
- Give women's funds the time and space to document their own support to girls, and to share experiences with peers to improve strategy and develop new tools.
- Open intergenerational dialogue between women's funds and girl-led groups.
- Support girls' and young women's leadership in spaces for collective activism (feminist, women's and youth movements) and for speaking in national and international forums.
- Develop research to better understand the context in which girls and young women live and organise.

Ultimately, the sustainability of current efforts and long-term success of gender equality goals relies on supporting and nurturing a younger generation of activists. Yet funding for girls' and young women's organising is not a priority; they are typically seen as the beneficiaries of projects managed by adults, rather than as being managers themselves. In the case of girls, they are even less visible, subject to their parents' control, and social and economic discrimination. Not bowing to hardships and roadblocks, young women and girls are forging ahead to transform themselves, their peers and their communities. Raising their voices in spaces where they are usually stifled, this generation of girls is growing their own leaders and movements to advance their rights worldwide.

Women's funds recognised this untapped potential and set out to bring greater visibility to girls' and young women's groups. Among community, regional and international funders, women's funds are strategically placed to get the right resources to these groups to achieve their goals. As a result of their emergence from the very movements they seek to support, women's funds are well connected to and have an expert understanding of the needs and opportunities of girls' and young women's groups working for human rights in their contexts. Women's funds are in many cases the first, main, and sometimes only source of support for initiatives led by girls and young women.

The women's funds participating in the CoP share a commitment to channelling resources specifically to groups of girls and young women who are often overlooked, like young indigenous women, young sexual and ethnic minorities, and young women working in the informal sector.

CoP members prioritised supporting these girls and young women— recognising that their voices and contributions matter and need to be lifted up in efforts to bring about lasting change.

Young women and girl activists were included at each step of the CoP process, starting with girl leaders being brought to the first meeting as the “experts in the room” and an increasing number of girl participants attending each subsequent meeting. By the third year, all CoP members were funding girls' and young women's organisations, with support expanding to previously unreached groups, like students, and to issues not necessarily associated with girls, such as their labour rights.

“Through the CoP we talked with women's funds and girl grantees from diverse backgrounds. We shared our experience of being funded and now also understand the difficulties of [funders],” says Po Yee “Bowie” Lam, founder and director of the Hong Kong-based young women's and girls' group Teen's Key, a HER Fund grantee partner. “[We developed a] deeper understanding of funders' concerns, and how they want to work with girls to achieve empowerment. Intergenerational cooperation is beneficial for both the women's funds and young women's groups.”

Over three years of working closely with young women, exploring young feminist culture and re-assessing their own internal systems, the CoP members learned that it is not only necessary for funders to take notice of young women's and girls' groups, but vital. Following are seven recommendations to consider when venturing into this exciting sphere along with examples of how CoP members moved these ideas in action.

## Defining Young Women and Girls

A challenge in finding and funding young women's and girls' groups starts with a simple definition of age. Among the CoP members, “young women” and “girls” are defined in various ways. **For this report, young women's and girls' groups are those comprised of girls and women 12-30 years old.** While young women and girls are at different life stages with different needs, there is a commonality between these groups. Approaching and working with young women was an important first entry point for CoP members to gain a deeper understanding and more access to girl-led groups, which are even less visible than those run by young women. Now with sustainable in-roads made into young women's and girls' groups, many CoP members are continuing to seek out girl-led groups to support the activism, agency and voice of today's youngest generation of feminists.

# 1. See Girls As Partners

**Take action: Broaden your perspective to see girls' and young women's groups as partners and experts, with their own particular and valid viewpoints.**

Funders have a broad interest in programmes for girls and young women, yet few have reached the next level of engagement to fund girl- and young women-led groups directly. Biases toward funding these groups include discomfort from boards unfamiliar with funding youth-led organisations, difficulty in locating appropriate groups, and reluctance by donors to provide funding to girl-led initiatives. Young women and girls are often viewed as beneficiaries, not as partners capable of transforming their own lives. “Because you are young and you are female they do not trust you,” says Po Yee of Teen’s Key. “There are lots of ideas in a young feminist’s mind, but we need more support to make it happen. Young feminists have to be creative—we are energetic, but we need more help, including money, funding, and partnerships.”

Rarely will girls' and young women's groups simply materialise with complete grant proposals. Many women's funds are intentionally funding emerging groups in earlier stages of their development, supporting them with flexible funding to launch and consolidate their efforts over time. This approach lends itself well to supporting girls' and young women's groups. CoP members learned that instead of just leading the girls and young women on a path dictated by the fund, it is important to give them the space to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own mistakes.

To successfully fund girls' and young women's groups, CoP members quickly realised that their own standard systems needed to be adapted to value and then facilitate girls' and young women's approaches to activism. It meant being open to funding unregistered groups, providing flexible support and being willing to explore alternative ways to conduct due diligence processes, looking beyond requiring detailed financial and organisational information.

There are three areas where there has been considerable learning, inspiration, and action for the CoP in terms of passing on the decision-making power to young women and girls:

1. Build programmes and strategies *with* girls as the first step in collaborative decision-making;
2. Invite young women and girls to participate in the selection process of groups to be awarded grants;
3. Include young women on the board of directors or in advisory bodies.

HER Fund, through its participation in the CoP, began to look for increasingly creative ways to work with girls' and young women's groups, growing their previous roles from beneficiaries to partners. “We've learned as a funder that we must have an innovative mind-set to get the young women involved,” says HER Fund staff. “We are not just using one way to give grants, but to know more about their culture, their character. We need to be brave enough to make the change to involve young women at a deeper level.”

After the second CoP meeting, held in 2012, HER Fund created a girls' and young women's platform in Hong Kong to advise HER Fund on its work with girls and young women. This platform is increasingly becoming a jumping off point for girls and young women to begin thinking of themselves as a movement with their own issues and priorities. Partnering with their grantee Teen's Key, HER Fund provided trainings for the young women to organise. This resulted in Teen's Key building the first young women-led non-profit board in Hong Kong. “Now that their board is young women they really get their voices heard,” says HER Fund staff. Placing young women in decision-making roles has bolstered their sense of empowerment and they are learning how to represent their organisations as equals in the women's movement.

The learning and growth of partnerships has gone both ways. Prior to their involvement in the CoP, Teen's Key was focused on completing their programmes, not sharing setbacks or challenges with their funders. "I now understand that for most funds, they are not only concerned about the completion of the programme they are funding. It is about the impact we can make together," comments Po Yee.

Oksana Dekhtiarova, head of the Luhansk Youth Regional Collaboration Centre in Ukraine, attended a CoP meeting as the young woman guest of the Ukrainian Women's Fund. "During the meeting, I learned to understand that girls around the world (being so different culturally) have so many similar problems," says Dekhtiarova. "This truth is for me a revelation. I learned to study the experience of others and analyse what may be beneficial to realities in the Ukraine." Dekhtiarova was later brought on as a board member for the Ukrainian Women's Fund.

Learning from the participatory approaches central to both Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres' and FRIDA's models, the Ukrainian Women's Fund also implemented a system of participatory evaluation of submitted project proposals. "We are convinced about the rightness of the decision to involve the participants in the programme in our strategic decisions," says Ukrainian Women's Fund staff. "So we began to involve as many participants from previous years as possible to build the girls' programme in the future." Each year the youth committee changes to include the girls who applied during the previous year. After participating in the proposal evaluation process, youth committee members noted that they were better able to see shortcomings in their own projects, became more sensitive to diversity issues and felt their own dignity and usefulness as they not only gave advice, but their advice was heard. Dekhtiarova, a youth committee participant, believes that the youth committee "is a great innovation that took a chance to involve girls in this process and strengthen their programmes."

The Reconstruction Women's Fund in Serbia piloted a grantmaking programme, 'Mirror', focused on supporting young women's activism. This enabled the fund to map the landscape of youth activism for several years and decide where it could most strategically allocate its resources. A board comprised of young women, including grantee-partners, made funding decisions for this particular programme.

Mama Cash in turn has provided flexible funding to encourage several emerging girl-led initiatives to spin-off from within women's rights organisations that had been grantee-partners over several years. This funding helped these organisations accompany the girls in their efforts to set up their own initiatives.

Following the CoP, Fondo Alquimia in Chile is piloting a new strategy to act as an administrative entity for a network formed by mostly unregistered young grassroots women's organisations.

CoP members now feel generally very close to the girls' and young women's groups, and the groups, in turn, consider the women's funds as allies that support their actions and respect their opinions and strategies. Perspectives and internal practices within the CoP shifted to see girls as not only grantee-partners, but to include the voices of girls and young women as peers.



## 2. Embrace New Approaches

**Take Action: Value alternative ideas on organising and adopt low-cost technologies to support communications and online organising.**

Working with and supporting girls' and young women's groups requires funders to look outside of their traditional channels and modes of work. "Young women bring a new perspective on women's rights, the problems we are facing and a new perspective to the solutions," says Oksana Kvitka, a young woman partner of the Ukrainian Women's Fund. Through the CoP, members began to grasp the diversity of this population and the different types of activism and contexts that are constantly evolving.

Worldwide, girls' and young women's groups are sharing information and skills and generating a vibrant activism through social media channels. Innovative apps and social media that open fluid communication channels and allow for online organising are mainstays with the girls' and young women's groups.

To keep up with this activity, CoP members began adopting low-cost technologies like Google chat, Skype, Messenger, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. These facilitate follow-up, streamline monitoring and evaluation, increase networks, and work to strengthen the overall relationship between the groups and funding organisations.

Urgent Action Fund-Africa uses Twitter to monitor issues and the work of their young women- and girl-led grantee partners. From trial and error, the Fund learned that Twitter is a faster and easier approach to gathering and disseminating information than using Facebook, where users must "like" a group before viewing the content. "These platforms have enabled us to link easily with the young women's and girls' groups and to also surface tangible ideas to combat the challenges they face," says Urgent Action Fund-Africa staff. "This has enabled us to direct our support to these issues."

At FRIDA, staff is using Twitter as a broader social tool to build FRIDA's constituency, share organising strategies, and mobilise resources. In Chile, girls' and young women's groups have created new activist trends with Twitter, using it to call for student mobilisations or to report police violence.

The Ukrainian Women's Fund was not only inspired to create a Facebook page after their participations in the CoP, but have gone further to use online platforms as outreach tools for their "First Step to Success" programme. In their quest to inspire and connect to a new wave of young,

female activists in the Ukraine, the "First Step" online magazine was born. Here young women and girls can find information on the programme, stories of girls who participated before, profiles of female leaders,

news on upcoming events and various informative resources for girls including trainings, networks to join, and grant opportunities.

To bring more attention to girls and young women who are "multiply marginalised"—non-heterosexual, of migrant background or handicapped—filia, based in Germany, set up a special Facebook page with the slogan "Without Girls—Without Me!" Working with the girls on its advisory board, filia is creating an online space for girls and young women who are activists and agents of social change to organise and control content themselves: their issues, their voices, their words.

CoP members found being open to the alternative ways girls' and young women's groups communicate and organise online, approach challenges, and formulate solutions to be a vital first step in working with these groups as partners.

***"Young women bring a new perspective on women's rights...and a new perspective to the solutions." -Oksana Kvitka***



### 3. Grow Inclusive Networks

**Take Action: Establish collaborations or networks at the national, regional and/or international level.**

As a strategy, networking local movements of young women and girls has enormous potential. It can influence change in communities as well as within national or regional human rights and feminist movements. Yet, all too often, women and girls are socially and economically segregated in their communities. Young women and girls trying to enact change are often isolated in their work and lack world experience due to their ages. “As girls’ and young women’s groups lack established networks, sometimes it is difficult to make an impact. If funders could connect us to more networks—of professionals, government services and available resources—it would make us visible, and I believe that we could make our impact greater,” says Kitman Irene Lam of Teen’s Key. Networking engages girls and young women in the issues that define their lives, and provides them with the tools, relationships, and opportunities required to lead. These spaces include online forums, face-to-face sessions, and workshops.

Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres supports regional exchanges on key issues affecting girls and young women in Central America. This enables girls to meet, develop connections, and strategise collectively.

The Mediterranean Women’s Fund holds feminist trainings to network young women in Algeria, France, Morocco, and Tunisia: “We

began to build an important network of young feminists and young feminist groups in our region. We support their projects and help them think strategically whenever they reach out to the network.” The Mediterranean Women’s Fund is exploring convening young feminists in Morocco to continue to grow and strengthen their regional network.

In Mongolia, where girls and young women are often confined by a conservative society, the first step to networking girls is to find them. Making the effort to know the terrain, the Mongolian Women’s Fund found allies in the social workers in the schools. Together, they were able to identify the target population of girls, gain the permission to work with them and bring them together. For the Mongolian Women’s Fund, the CoP was key in revitalising their network with younger activists: “Our activists are close to retirement and we need young activists addressing the new issues. We’ll work on building the movement.”

Similarly, in Serbia the Reconstruction Women’s Fund finds that Roma girls often face at least three levels of discrimination: being Roma, female, and young. “Creating an active learning space for Roma girls and an on-going model of recruitment and activism is crucial to achieving our long-term goal of building solidarity to narrow numerous social gaps and to gain political voice,” says Reconstruction Women’s Fund staff. In 2011, the “Roma Girls’ Solidarity” programme created an open space where over 40 young women and girls, ages 14-21, from southern Serbia learned with and from each other. Bringing the Roma girls together created a safety net network to combat their isolation through sharing, creativity, and fun.

These approaches and networks supported the development of girls’ and young women’s leadership, beyond their capacity as individuals and linking this to the context of their collective activism.



Photo courtesy of Girls Empowerment Network (GENET) in Malawi

## 4. Invest in Research

### **Take Action: Fund baseline and investigative research in the issues being pursued by girls' and young women's groups.**

There is a persistent need for research on the issues faced by girls to gain a comprehensive understanding of the realities in their particular contexts. Girls' and young women's groups are also expressing a great need for research funding to help legitimise their work. "We have no research to talk about impact," says Rudo Chigudu of Katswe Sistahood in Zimbabwe. "How can I say how much has changed if there is no baseline? We are not taken seriously. Some funders think we are just making assumptions about what the reality is—if we can present facts and figures we can be taken more seriously in our advocacy work."

The 2011 CoP baseline survey, created by Mama Cash and Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, was completed by 22 women's funds worldwide in preparation for the formation of the CoP. The findings offered important insights and acted as a vital starting point for CoP members. Annual follow-up surveys to CoP members provided opportunities to document progress, lessons learned, and change over time.

On the individual fund level, the Ukrainian Women's Fund conducts an annual survey with young women and girls, aged 16-23, in Ukraine to track what girls consider to be the most acute problems that they can tackle and solve themselves. In addition, the fund disseminates a questionnaire to members of its youth network on their capacities to more efficiently develop and strengthen the young women's movement. The fund shares the results back to the girls' and young women's groups to help them legitimise their work in the eyes of adult community leaders and with other possible funders.

HER Fund supported a study on harassment of young women who work in the service sector, such as waitresses. Young women working for the Association for the Advancement of Feminism carried out the study. With their results, the group pressed the local government to revise the city ordinance on sexual harassment to include harassment by customers in the workplace. Staff at the Equal Opportunity Commission in Hong Kong replied that they support the revision to the ordinance—the research paper created a clear impact at the policy level.

***"How can I say how much has changed if there is no baseline? We are not taken seriously. Some funders think we are just making assumptions about what the reality is—if we can present facts and figures we can be taken more seriously in our advocacy work."***  
***-Rudo Chigudu***

Funding research on under-addressed or contested issues and for groups that are not given platforms to speak from helps open avenues for discussion and action. Urgent Action Fund-Africa supported the Queer African Youth Network, based in Burkina Faso, to carry out a multicounty needs assessment in various trans\* communities in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal. The aim of the research was to reveal the

multitude of trans\* identities and the strategies used by trans\* individuals to adapt to and face challenges. The documentation project was a collaborative effort with queer women, giving voice to the emerging issues young, queer women will face in the coming years.

FRIDA launched an international field scan, mapping trends of young feminists' activism, analysing its grants application data for the past three years. This data is key to telling the story of the priorities, challenges, and realities girls- and young women-led groups are facing across the globe.

# 5. Fund Capacity Building

**Take Action: Go beyond programme funding to offer capacity building through workshops, trainings, and mentoring.**

The CoP discovered that young women- and girl-led groups are successful when funders provide close accompaniment support—acting as peers, mentors, and partners on the ground and in their communities when needed. While direct funding is important, girls and young women also need specific advice and follow-up on project execution, fundraising, financial literacy, and leadership development. “As young women and girls, we have potential and have the power to make change for ourselves and other women,” says Po Yee of Teen’s Key. “However, we are young and lack experience so we need help in investing in our future so we can do work for ourselves and other young women.”

To ensure that the participation of young women and girls in organisational and policymaking processes is meaningful, they must have sufficient capacity to think critically, and have the skills necessary to implement their creative ideas. Girls’ and young women’s groups identified mentorship programmes as an ideal way to build their capacity. Girls and young women tend to create more horizontal and inclusive leadership based on collective mobilisation, rather than centralised leadership and hierarchies. This opens space for mutual learning among girls and young women and their allies, creating ample opportunities for mentoring. The key is that the mentors continue to recognise and respect the self-organising principles and visions of the young women and girls.

In response to the demand for capacity building, half of the CoP members developed mentoring or training programmes, organised forums and created new spaces for dialogue around young women’s and girls’ rights. Being rooted in the community and located in the same country as the girls and young women, many women’s funds find they are well placed to strengthen intergenerational dialogue and support movement building.

Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres’ hands-on strategy includes integrated support of grantee-partners. The fund provides regular capacity building activities, which includes supporting girls and young women to strengthen their organisational and financial skills. In addition to formal capacity support, the fund’s staff is always open to communicating with grantee-partners. This accessibility is particularly important for emerging groups as they have so many doubts in the beginning. Knowing that the fund is there to support them helps raise their confidence.

The Ukrainian Women’s Fund developed a mentorship programme under their “First Step to Success” programme. The programme brings girls and young women in touch with successful women—such as office holders, business owners, artisans and NGO directors—so they can develop their skills and put ideas into practice. Graduates of the programme are also chosen to act as mentors and lead master-classes and trainings. “We recognise that mentoring is the development of relationships, which requires time, effort, respect, sincerity, and commitment from both sides,” says staff at the Ukrainian Women’s Fund. “From our point of view, we see really rapid growth of girls who are actively involved in the mentoring process.”

HER Fund set out to identify promising girls’ and young women’s groups, but found that young women in Hong Kong were more interested in piloting their own individual projects. In response, HER Fund developed the “HER Sparkles – Young Women’s Action for Social Change” programme and invited young women and girls to submit applications with innovative projects related to gender and social change. Keeping the collaborative model of decision-making from the CoP meetings in mind, HER Fund asked its young women grantees to interview the applicants and consulted with the young women on the overall process of the pilot programme.

“We wanted their voices at the ground level,” explains HER Fund staff. During the first stage of the programme, HER Fund worked with an outside consultant to build the leadership capabilities of the young women to bring their voices to the surface through a series of workshops.

“Our young women grantee-partners have their own skill sets, as do the ‘HER Sparkle’ programme participants, so we brought them together to share their experiences as experts,” says HER Fund staff. “In Hong Kong most leadership training programmes are when beneficiaries come to listen to adults who tell them what type of leader to be. In ‘HER Sparkles,’ the young women feel we see them as partners who have the capabilities to lead their own way.”

In 2013, Urgent Action Fund-Africa, which funds throughout the continent, initiated its mentorship programme. Young women and girls from Malawi, Kenya, Cote D’Ivoire, Cameroon, and South Sudan came together in a rigorous mentoring process to build high-calibre leaders within the media, business, and political spheres. “Our decision to support young women’s and girls’ leadership has not only increased our presence on the ground, but it has also given us a deeper understanding of the issues in the region,” comments Urgent Action Fund-Africa staff.

When young women have the resources necessary to advance their priorities, their leadership grows. Support for capacity building, including leadership development, helps make young women’s and girls’ transformations visible and creates spaces for their recognition as agents of change from local to regional levels. This is true for feminist arenas and also other public spaces where young women and girls are beginning to have their voices heard.



Photo courtesy of Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres

## 6. Make M&E Systems Accessible

**Take Action: Rethink and adapt monitoring and evaluation systems to the realities and context of girls and young women.**

As girls' and young women's groups try to launch their projects and keep them rolling, they often find themselves mired in monitoring and evaluation processes, which differ greatly from funder to funder. "As a young women's group we receive a lot of small grants, so a lot of time is taken up in trying to fundraise and report on ten very small grants," says Rudo Chigudu of Katswe Sistahood. "That time could be spent rolling out a project or doing something effective with real impact instead of spending time trying to account to ten donors. That achieves the donor's agenda, but in terms of work being done on the ground you have achieved next to nothing."

Understanding that monitoring and evaluation systems are new territory for girls' and young women's groups, CoP members placed a great emphasis on participatory methodologies to bring out young women's own perspectives. The girls' and young women's experiences and contexts contribute to building knowledge on how funders can improve the ways they address the relationship beyond giving grants and what type of support is needed.

Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres' model includes both individual and collective processes. Groups conduct individual reporting on their grant, which is then supplemented by a collective process in which grantee-partners come together to reflect about their collective achievements, challenges, and work. "This [process] contributes to the strengthening of the regional movement and to peer learning," says Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres' staff.

Other innovative strategies bloomed throughout the life of the CoP. FRIDA completed a participatory process of creating indicators with its constituency of young women and girls, building their skills on monitoring and evaluation along the way. The Mongolian Women's Fund made their forms simpler, adjusting to the context of girls and groups rather than having the same forms for all their grantees.

Social media is also being used to support informal monitoring of activities and progress.

Fondo Alquimia is piloting the use of Twitter as a way to gather information, and FRIDA uses Facebook, Twitter, and a new online platform to connect groups. These tools are used strategically to support the fund in its efforts to keep in touch with girls' and young women's groups, learning about what they are doing, the people that follow them, what they are

posting, and how they portray the issues important to their work. "We have at the end a more holistic view of what they are doing. What the group can share in a report is very limited, and social media makes it more dynamic," says FRIDA staff.

Reaching out to girls' and young women's groups using alternative strategies, like social media and online platforms, and working with the groups to bolster their own experience with monitoring and evaluation systems not only fulfills the needs of the donor, but also strengthens the girl- and young women-led organisations.

***"[With Facebook] we have at the end a more holistic view of what they are doing. What the group can share in a report is very limited, and social media makes it more dynamic." –  
FRIDA staff***

# 7. Build Bridges to Other Donors

**Take Action: Actively advocate for girls' and young women's groups with donors to open new funding opportunities.**

One of the main goals of the CoP was to shift the funding landscape to make it more accessible to girls' and young women's organisations across the world. With their limited networks, girls' and young women's groups need allies to get their foot in the door with new donors, including those not currently funding girls' and young women's groups. For example, "the existing government grant system in Hong Kong is complex and bureaucratic so we need to look for funding outside of Hong Kong. If our funders provide guidance and connect us to more donors, we can learn faster and make our impact greater," says Kitman of Teen's Key.

As women's funds, the CoP members are well placed to advocate for and connect girls' and young women's groups to other regional and international funders who have less experience with these emerging youth groups and their needs. While relationships continue to strengthen between women's funds and girls' and young women's groups, the women's funds also act as a bridge to other funders. During the CoP, several leveraged new funding for their grantee-partners by introducing them to other funders, including peer women's funds. In addition to direct introductions, the funds also employ other tools to facilitate funding opportunities for girls' and young women's organisations.

The Ukrainian Women's Fund partners with girls' and young women's group grantees in joint ventures to seek funding from international donors. The fund acts as the seeker and recipient of the grant for the joint project, which overcomes obstacles that new, young groups often face when seeking grants. For example, The Ukrainian Women's Fund applied to receive a grant from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women in partnership with a coalition of girl- and young women-led organisations. The fund then provided sub-grants to the girls' and young women's groups throughout the Ukraine.

"In this case, girls are not only [our] grantees, but partners in a joint venture," says the Ukrainian Women's Fund staff. The fund also organises meetings between international funders and girls directly. In 2014, members of UN agencies, representing priority areas for financing youth, were introduced to successful and active young women and girls in the Ukrainian Women's Fund's First Step network.

In Chile, the Fondo Alquimia is developing a sustainability programme for organisations seeking new resources. From 2013-2015 the fund built a financial bridge by acting as the fiscal sponsor for girls' and young women's groups promoting the right to choose and the decriminalisation of abortion. By connecting these groups to new resources, two organisations working in Chile for the decriminalisation of abortion were able to implement the Abortion Line, a telephone line giving advice and guidance to women.

Mama Cash joined the With and For Girls Collective in 2014, a new donor collective of eight organisations that, in its first year, leveraged US\$1 million to support local organisations working with and for girls. By making up to 20 awards of unrestricted funding to small- and medium-sized grassroots organisations around the world, the awards support girl-driven organisations working to change the lives of adolescent girls where they live. Mama Cash staff shared, "this new partnership enables us to build on the learnings of the CoP and to support girl-led organisations to access new funding."

Girls' and young women's groups greatly benefit when funders unleash their knowledge about and connections to the broader funding landscape. Together, it is possible to shift funding priorities to become more open to supporting girls' and young women's human rights organising.

# Summary

When looking to fund girls' and young women's groups, the Community of Practice of women's funds recommends the following.

## 1. See Girls As Partners

*Take action:* Broaden your perspective to see girls' and young women's groups as partners and experts, with their own particular and valid viewpoints.

## 2. Embrace New Approaches

*Take Action:* Value alternative ideas on organising and adopt low-cost technologies to support communications and online organising.

## 3. Grow Inclusive Networks

*Take Action:* Establish collaborations or networks at the national, regional and/or international level.

## 4. Invest in Research

*Take Action:* Fund baseline and investigative research in the issues being pursued by girls' and young women's groups.

## 5. Fund Capacity Building

*Take Action:* Go beyond programme funding to offer capacity building through workshops, trainings, and mentoring.

## 6. Make M&E Systems Accessible

*Take Action:* Rethink and adapt monitoring and evaluation systems to the realities and context of girls and young women.

## 7. Build Bridges to Other Donors

*Take Action:* Actively advocate for girls' and young women's groups with other donors to open new funding opportunities.

**ma  
ma  
cash**  
(she changes the world)

Mama Cash  
PO Box 15686  
1001 ND Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)20 515 87 00  
F +31 (0)20 515 87 99  
E [info@mamacash.org](mailto:info@mamacash.org)  
I [www.mamacash.org](http://www.mamacash.org) / [www.mamacash.nl](http://www.mamacash.nl)

Bank: IBAN NL58INGB0000000528



[twitter.com/mamacash](https://twitter.com/mamacash)



[www.facebook.com/mamacashfund](https://www.facebook.com/mamacashfund)