

Summary report: Young Feminists Blooming

Exploring how donors can better shift power and resources to young feminist organisations and movements

The Feminist Circle



For children and
equality for girls

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Why Plan International commissioned this research

Youth movements and young feminist organisations are at the forefront of development and humanitarian work, providing critical services and driving transformational change for and with their communities in ways that adult-led organisations are unable. However, power dynamics frequently exclude them from decision making spaces and prevent them from accessing resources and support, despite this becoming a fast-growing priority for donors and civil society actors. This trend mirrors the increasing calls from young people themselves, who are [demanding](#) that they are treated as equal partners and that their work is respected and funded.

We believe that Plan International has a role to play in amplifying these demands and supporting young people, and the organisations they are connected to, to increase their access to the support and resources in line with their priorities. We know that a more balanced international aid system, which shifts power to those closest to communities, will generate more effective development policy and programmes and appropriate responses for people affected by crises.

Achieving this will require action to address the structural, political, and internal barriers that are preventing donors (and the wider sector) significant shifts of power, decision-making and resources, to those young people and girl-and-youth-led organisations. This is what we hope to change. We view this research project as an important contribution that will help us continue to shape our influencing approach and challenge the way we operate as an organisation.

Foreword

Hello! This is Daria, Ipsita, Rebeca and Tariro. We founded and work together under the feminist collective 'The Feminist Circle'.

We are a multicultural team of activists and development professionals interested in working to enhance human rights, gender equality, and social justice. We graduated from the Masters Program in Gender and Development of the Institute of Development Studies from the University of Sussex. We became part of a wider network of feminists that support each other on different projects, promoting advocacy activities and sharing information to support the causes we care about.

We work together bringing our professional and lived experiences as feminists living, working, and fighting for equality from different corners of the world. We are excited to contribute to amplifying feminist movements and activists across age, generation, contexts and belonging sharing knowledge, skills, attitudes, experiences and collectively challenging power hierarchies and dynamics.

This paper presents the key findings from a recent research project, commissioned by Plan International UK to help inform their approach to engaging with and influencing institutional donors to shift power and more and better resources to youth-led and young feminist organisations and movements.

The full research report, *Young Feminists Blooming: A discussion on how institutional donors can effectively transform practices and transfer power and resources to young feminists organisations and movements*, is for internal Plan International audiences. Plan International will be using the research findings to shape and inform its policy positioning and advocacy agenda on this critical issue, both in the UK and globally.

This summary report, which is being shared with research participants, provides an overview of the key findings that emerged from the research. The key findings are based on the insights and experiences shared with us by research participants, including young feminists working in youth-and-girl-led organisations,, and from the evidence that emerged through the literature review.¹

This research summary is intended to highlight the main themes that emerged with the intention of opening and supporting ongoing dialogue on how to better resource young feminist organisations and movements. We hope this summary report will be useful in supporting them when navigating donor's space and advocating for more inclusivity and fairness in the funding process. We hope that the findings will be of value when adapted and applied in different contexts and according to the various needs and priorities of those utilising this report.

¹ Findings do not necessarily represent agreed Plan International UK policy positions.

We believe in dialogue and co-construction. If you would like to reach us for feedback or ask us anything, please, feel free to contact us anytime thefeministcircle@gmail.com. We will be happy to answer your questions and support you in the best way that we can.

In Solidarity,



The Feminist Circle

Daria, Ipsita, Rebeca & Tariro

Introduction

Young feminist organisations and movements (YFOMs), including those led by girls and youth in all their diversity, are integral in forming diverse feminist movements that create and push for a change that is inclusive of and supports people from diverse identities and backgrounds. Their meaningful and inclusive participation is also critical to shifting the balance of power within the aid sector, requiring a commitment from donors, international NGOs (INGOs), and governments to share power and shift resources.

Young people all over the world are organising and building movements. They are already at the forefront of development and humanitarian work. They are providing critical services and driving transformative change for and with their communities in ways that adult-led or larger organisations are unable. In our interaction with young people, we discovered how they are leading the conversations on climate change, gender justice and education campaigns. From advocating for abortion rights in Latin America to fighting for girls' education in Asia, young feminists are championing it all. Supporting inclusive youth-led and feminist collective action and movement building is key to gender transformation. It has the power to shift norms and behaviours and to create positive and lasting social change.

"We are not just the future, we are the now and investing in us is beneficial for all in the long term." Young Feminist Leader from MENA Focus Group Discussion

Yet, power dynamics (including those based on age, or adultism), and institutional barriers frequently exclude them from accessing support and resources. A more balanced international aid system, which shifts power to those closest to communities, will generate more effective development policy and programmes and appropriate responses for people affected by crises.

Therefore, we believe that existing funding modalities need to be transformed to make them more accessible to YFOMs, ensuring that people of diverse identities and backgrounds are able to access the direct and indirect financial and non-financial support they need.

This research summary highlights some of the key obstacles, highlights areas of good practice, and presents some ideas on what needs to change for a more inclusive funding ecosystem that supports resource mobilisation for girls' rights and young feminist organisations and movements. The aim of this research summary is to inform and support an ongoing solutions-orientated dialogue to plot a way forward for increased funding to young feminist movements and organisations as a catalytic strategy for achieving gender justice. It is important to note that the YFOMs that participated were drawn from diverse areas of implementation which include, Sexual

and Reproductive Health and Rights, gender equality, women's economic empowerment, arts, and political participation.

The summary research is presenting in the following sections:

1. **Seeds of change: what participants told us** – Here we summarise the key and multiple barriers that young feminist organisations and movements face in accessing sustainable funding and resources while arousing a conversation for overcoming them.
2. **What is possible? Rooting in good funding practices** – In this section, we showcase a range of good practices in funding that is accessible to YFOMs.
3. **What young feminists need: a call to action** – In this section we summarise some of the key recommendations on how more effectively to shift money, power and resources to local and national young feminist organisations and movements by dismantling specific barriers that young people face when seeking funds from donors.

Methodology

The research was conducted through participatory processes with YFOMs, including an online survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

We conducted five online focus group discussions divided by region, with different organisations and movements. We hosted one focus group for South-East Africa, one for Latin America, two for South-East Asia, and one for the MENA region.

We also conducted 1:1 semi-structured interviews with selected YFOMs representatives to delve deeper into some of the critical issues raised during the focus group discussions. We also offered this possibility to relevant organisations that were not able to join the collective discussion. In total, 29 young² feminist leaders across 15 different countries participated in the research.

In addition, we conducted eight semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with academics, development practitioners, bilateral and multilateral donors, and specialist women's funds. Furthermore, a desk review was conducted to establish the basis of existing feminist funding principles.

² While we typically follow UN definitions of youth, age 15 to 24, the eldest research participant working in a youth organisation was 28.

Seeds of change: what participants told us

Through the research, a wide range of challenges emerged that are hindering the ability of YFOMs to access the necessary flexible and sustainable funding and other support to meet their ambitions. These have been categorised in three broad areas:

- Power dynamics within the system that hold young feminists back.
- Limited availability and accessibility of financial resources in line with their priorities.
- Limited provision of non-financial support and capacity strengthening.

These challenges have been well documented and are not new but remain critical challenges to be overcome.³



Figure n.1- Listening to the YFOMs and their demands

³ It should be noted that the findings that emerged through this research do not represent an exhaustive list of barriers and challenges faced by youth-and-girl-led organisations.

Power dynamics within the system that hold young feminists back

Donor-driven agendas

YFOMs felt that donors⁴ set agendas and shape the funding landscape. Young people continue to be excluded from decision making spaces, which limits their ability to set agendas. They are not often engaged by donors in dialogue or involved as participants and co-creators when donors are developing policy or designing programmes.

“If you are a group of young people wanting to do something, you are not taken seriously by adults. There is name-calling of YFOMs as immature and irresponsible thus affecting our access to funding” Youth activists from the Africa Region.

This not only perpetuates unequal power dynamics between donors and young people, but also results in donors’ priorities not aligning with those of young feminist and youth-led organisations or not adequately responding to contextual challenges and community needs. Research participants felt that grant-making takes a top-down approach that they struggle to fit in. They want to be actively included in setting agendas, programme design, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.

Accessibility of funding calls

Funding calls frequently use bureaucratic, technical, and adult-centric language that is intimidating or inaccessible to many YFOMs. Participants from the MENA and South Asia regions also highlighted additional language barriers related to the need to present proposals in English.

Limited availability and accessibility of financial resources in line with young people’s priorities

Support for community-based organisations

Community-based organisations remain under-resourced and under-supported. Power imbalances in the sector favour the dominance of larger international and national organisations, usually led by adults, who continue to receive most available funding.

⁴ Most of the participants did not have direct access to, and engagement with, institutional donors. They tried to fit their objectives to the open calls available from this type of donors without success; mostly they experienced exclusion.

“We acknowledge that in recent years donors have made funding and resources more available to young feminist organisations, but they keep giving big organisations big money/millions. Why not break the one million to fund hundreds of virgin organisations? Could it be that we are “high risk?” Youth activist from the Africa Region FGD.

Where funding is available, it is often limited, resulting in significant competition amongst different organisations for the same resources. Young feminists are demanding that donors offer more funding to local and community-based and women’s rights organisations overall, with specific support available to youth-and-girl-led organisations and movements. They are also calling on donors to facilitate access to funding for organisations that have not previously received any, helping to strengthen the capacity of a diverse range of organisations and partners.

Long-term, sustainable, and flexible funding

Research participants emphasised a desire for donors to increase the flexibility of funding so that projects and programmes can adapt in response to community needs. They noted that organisations working directly with communities know what is needed and how to best deliver in their local contexts, but they have a challenge with funding that is restricted and inflexible.

In addition to funding being more flexible and responsive, YFOMs also called for more funding that supports long-term sustainability of organisations and movements. This includes funding to support overheads and core costs, such as project staff salaries or allowances, rather than only being directed towards project activities.

“As YFOMs we demand long-term programmatic funds instead of short instalments” Youth activists from the Asia Pacific FGD.

Eligibility criteria

Strict eligibility criteria also pose a major challenge to YFOMs seeking to accessing institutional funding. Many of the participants come from grassroots organisations that are still evolving and establishing themselves. Some are not yet registered, sometimes through choice, and have not received any funding before. Others do not have well established governance systems in place that can hinder their access to funding.

“Keep in mind that smaller and informal organisations will have a harder time meeting conditions such as: being registered, previous funding, previous similar projects or operating for at least three years”. - Youth activist from the MENA Region FGD.

“Eligibility requirements are too complicated and too complex”. - Youth activist from the Africa Region FGD.

Limited provision of non-financial support and capacity strengthening

Proposal development and fundraising

Research participants called on donors and partners to increase investment in strengthening the capacity of community-based organisations and project staff. One area they felt donors and partners could support them in is to strengthen their skills and capacity to develop successful proposals.

“We do not require only financial support but capacity strengthening of staff and allocation of a certain percentage of the budget to organisational strengthening”. Youth activist from Africa Region.

They would value non-financial support, from both funders and through peer support (e.g. from women’s rights organisations) in the provision of more and better information on grant cycles and grant-making procedures, as well as support with grant-writing.

*“Provide learning opportunities for grant writing ahead of grant cycles”
Youth activist from the Asia Pacific Region FGD*

“Create how-to guides/videos to help with the application process” Youth activist from the MENA Region FGD

They felt that such provisions would increase their confidence, skills and success-rates when applying for funding.

Leadership and well-being support

Research participants highlighted a need for additional support to strengthen the leadership skills, mentoring support, and knowledge around the legal and health rights of young feminist leaders to support them to learn and grow in safe and healthy environments. It was noted that despite their work to advance the rights and empower or improve the lives of others, their own health needs and access to legal support can be neglected. During our conversations with young leaders, we collected concerns related to burnouts, excessive workloads, lack of proper salaries, and limited access to self-care spaces.

The need for capacity building, peer learning and sharing, wellbeing and self-care support is even more critical in the current context and would support feminist organisations that are facing a well-coordinated and well-funded opposition and backlash (The Bridgespan Group 2022; Staszewska et. al. 2020; AWID and Frida Fund 2016).

Safety and security

Some organisations operate in adverse and challenging environments and are at risk of backlash. This is especially the case when working on 'controversial' issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights or LGBTQI+ rights, for example, particularly in countries where homosexuality is criminalised. The ability to operate safely and securely, including in these challenging contexts, were raised as an important concern by research participants. They highlighted the need for more and greater support from donors and partners, including when they are supported to engage in regional or international fora.

What is possible? Rooting in good funding practices

Throughout the research, good practices were identified that show how different funders have been able to facilitate more youth-friendly, flexible, and accessible grant-making processes. They have also provided other non-financial support, including accompaniment and technical support, to YFOMs. We have divided the good practices observed into four main areas:

- Strengthening engagement with YFOMs
- Inclusive grant making
- Capacity strengthening
- Project implementation support

Strengthening engagement with YFOMs

For young people to be considered equal partners, it is important to deconstruct the narratives that devalue their contributions. Donors and peer adult-led organisations need to proactively create and reinforce cultures and practices that are inclusive of young people, rather than replicate power hierarchies that exclude them (Johnson, Lewin, Cannon 2020). Building trust takes time and requires donors to ask questions with empathy and respect, aware of their own identity, positionality, power, and privilege (Partnetti and Russell 2021).

Approaches to this will differ. To ensure their programme strategies resonate with local contexts and the priorities of young people, for example, donors such as [Frida Fund](#) have local/regional representatives that connect with YFMOs to understand their current and emerging priorities and better understand the local socio-political

contexts that they are operating within. This helps to inform and set the donor's priorities and strategy.

A similar approach has been adopted by other feminist or specialised funds, such as [Leading from the South Fund](#), which actively hires feminist activists and staff with experience working directly for YFOMs, and therefore able to understand the context and challenges they face. Others have formed steering and advisory committees with feminist, women's and girls' rights activists who contribute to donor governance, as well provide an important bridge to YFOMs (Staszewska et. al. 2020).

"We have been in contact with some donors who are trying to be the ones who adapt to our reality and not the other way around. Donors who know that it is their responsibility to understand our language and not the other way around, who allow us to render reports the way we can and do not try to impose agenda items on us, but they are the minority." - Youth Activist from the Latin America Discussion

Other initiatives seek to connect civil society, activists, and funders to design strategies to work towards gender justice. For example, the [Gender Justice Initiative of EDGE Funders Alliance](#) is a network of donors, foundation officers, trustees, and advisors who collaborate to deepen their understanding and share knowledge on different contexts, issues, priorities and responses, with the aim of co-designing better solutions.

Inclusive grant making

Good grant making practices that were identified throughout the research aimed to make the grant making process inclusive and flexible, with priorities aligned with those of women's rights organisations (WROs) and YFOMs. These practices focused on reducing the technical barriers that YFOMs might face with more 'traditional' grant making approaches.

Open calls for proposals and participatory grant making

Some feminist funders and private donors have developed open calls for proposals that aim to align with, and support, what young feminist and women's rights organisations are already prioritising (rather than expecting organisations to fit into pre-determined donor priorities). Some, such as [Frida](#) and [Purposeful](#), also build in participatory approaches into their grant making processes.

For example, the [With and For Girls Fund database](#), an initiative by Purposeful is always open for girls activists to submit profiles in multiple formats throughout the year. Applicants are then invited to a dialogue-based application within funding

windows and then a panel made up of girl activists from around the world decides on funding allocations.

This type of grant making process promotes young feminists who are deeply connected to on-the-ground realities to decide what strategies are needed and what should be implemented with the resources available. Local funds now implement this type of grant making process in specific countries, such as [Fondo Semillas](#) in Mexico.

This practice acknowledges that there are no current social justice challenges that are exclusive to one identity, as women and girls do not live single-issue lives. [Grant-making processes created from an intersectional approach](#) reflect the complex realities of the highly inequitable distribution of power and privilege women girls, and gender non-conforming people face and break down traditional identity or issue-based funding silos to create cross-movement opportunities for the most impactful change (Partnetti and Russell 2021; Astrea Lesbian Foundation for Justice 2022).

“Approaching problems from an intersectional perspective is a way to help feminist groups to flourish” - Interview with Frida Fund.

Increasing inclusivity and accessibility by simplifying the process

To help overcome some of the technical barriers associated with more ‘traditional’ grant making, some donors have adapted their selection processes to be as accessible and youth accessible as possible by reducing the stages of the process, simplifying the requirements, and practising non-technical language.

To reduce language barriers, good donor practice includes the development of calls for proposals in several languages with simple and accessible language. For example, Frida Fund, Mama Cash, and [Global Fund for Women](#) have simplified questionnaires in which organisations are required to explain their objectives and the activities they currently do, as well as the activities that will be carried out if the grant is approved, along with general information of the annual budget of the organisation.

Recognising that YFOMs are often community-based organisations or come from some disadvantaged regions, [Frida Fund](#) accepts offline applications to avoid excluding valuable proposals. [Purposeful](#) receives profiles via text, voice notes, video, and other artistic expression formats. Similarly, donors such as [Mama Cash](#) have affirmative actions to fund disadvantaged groups, therefore as an internal policy, preference for groups who are from marginalised communities or realities who have not received money before is set as a priority.

Moreover, these donors recognise the importance of ensuring that calls for proposals are released within a good timeframe to ensure ample time for widespread dissemination and for WROs and YFOMs to prepare proposals. Many calls for proposals are complemented by guidance documents that aim to support applicants

when developing their proposals. For example, [Women's Fund Asia](#) has a [call pack](#) that is disseminated with the call for proposal, it is in different languages and includes formats, guidelines, and frequently asked questions.

Working with unregistered groups and organisations

Initiatives and organisations led by girls and young people are often unregistered and less formally established than traditional adult-led groups. This can be a [deliberate choice](#) (for example, they may face backlash when working on specific human rights issues) or due to more practical reasons such as prohibitive registration costs or because, in some countries, youth are not allowed to register their organisations. This can often exclude YFOMs from accessing donor funding, which usually require specific registration documents as part of their eligibility criteria.

To overcome this challenge, [Frida Fund](#) has implemented other ways of verifying that the organisations and collectives are operational and working on the ground. This includes, for example, requesting recommendation letters or references from other trusted actors. Where feasible, [Mama Cash](#) also encourages grantees to explore the viability of being registered by the end of the grant period.

Other solutions include the requirement to select a registered organisation to receive the funds and lead financial management, budgeting, and reporting. Some donors (both institutional and more flexible ones, such as [Frida Fund](#)) find ways of moving money to reach community-based organisations through pooled funds or channelling through intermediaries.

Continuously reflecting on grant making processes

Donors such as [Frida Fund](#), [Mama Cash](#), and [Global Fund for Women](#) invite applicants to provide feedback on the application and grant making process as part of their own organisational learning and improvement processes. They aim to incorporate suggested improvements in forthcoming funding rounds.

Capacity-strengthening

As part of efforts to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of grantees, feminists funds such as [Frida Fund](#), [Global Fund for Women](#) and [Mama Cash](#) include the provision of unrestricted, flexible funds or core funding to WROs and YFOMs. This more flexible approach to funding is recognised as key to effectively supporting the sustainability of movements and effectively shifting power dynamics.

In addition to this type of more flexible and core funding, we identified a range of other capacity strengthening support that donors have provided targeted funding for:

- Participation in training and learning opportunities, peer-networking and engagement, and self-care retreats.
- Capacity strengthening initiatives including technical support and security.
- Special grants focused on providing financial support to cover travel costs, the entrance to a conference, and national and international advocacy and networking opportunities.

Specific examples include:

- The [African Women's Development Fund Capacity Building Program](#) to help organisations to perform core functions sustainably, and continue to improve and develop over time.
- [Mama Cash accompaniment support](#) to cover capacity building, organisational development, networking, and fundraising opportunities.
- Frida Fund which provides [different types of support and resources](#) in addition to the core grant that YFOMs receive.
- [Fondo de Mujeres del Sur](#) which promotes face-to-face or virtual meetings and training sessions with the groups and organisations it supports.
- [Purposeful collectivised accompaniment and care funds](#) and [Luminate Partner Support Programme](#) to cultivate resilient, healthy, inclusive, and well-networked organisations.

Project implementation support

A range of good practices were identified in relation to ongoing support and allyship to successful grantees throughout project implementation. These include:

- Some donors have accompaniment programmes that connect YFOMs and young feminist activists with focal points and advisors during the grant. These accompaniment programs can be as providing advisors, mainly young feminist leaders, and/or provide regional or local spaces for peer learning.
- Women's funds such as [Frida Fund](#), [Mama Cash](#), [Global Fund for Women](#), and members of [Leading from the South Fund](#), treat YFOMs as partners who are collaborating to generate social changes.
- Other donors, such as [Open Society Foundations](#) and [The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#), have scaled-back financial and narrative reporting processes (e.g. annual rather than every 3-6 months), using simple reporting formats. This reduces the reporting and administrative burdens on implementing organisations through creative ways of reporting that are meaningful for both parts to promote learning.

What young feminists need: a call to action



Figure n.2- Young Feminist Principles

Feminist organisations around the world, and those led by girls and young people especially, are critically underfunded and under-resourced. Addressing the most deep-rooted issues that girls and young women in their diversity face requires a radical shift in thinking, assumptions, and policies about how to shift more power and resources to young feminist working to deliver community-driven projects.

To help facilitate ongoing dialogues about how this shift could be accelerated, the following **recommendations to donors** have been clustered in line with, and in response to, the kinds of support that young feminists told us they wanted:

- **Shift power** to youth-and-girl-led feminist organisations and movements.
- Provide more and better-quality **financial resources** through more **inclusive grant making processes**.
- Increase **non-financial support and resources** to strengthen youth-and-girl-led feminist organisations and movements.

As well as being informed by the young feminists that participated in the research, the recommendations draw upon and reflect some of the good practice that donors are already implementing, as well as the insights they provided us during the interviews. While offering a guide for donors, they will need to be adapted according to the context and in line with the priorities and needs of the young feminist organisations, including those led by girls and young women in their diversity, that donors are engaged with.



Figure n. 3 – Recommendations

Shift power to youth-and-girl-led young feminist organisations and movements

Map, make visible and amplify the work of young leaders, feminist organisations and movements

Map and make visible the work and impact YFOMs by leveraging donor reach and networks to raise the profile and demonstrate the important contribution that young

feminists make to social change. Amplifying their work could potentially crowd in funding and resourcing from other donors in the future. This could be achieved by actions such as:

- Mapping young feminist organisations and movements operating at local, national, and regional levels.
- Connecting youth-led, young feminist and women's rights organisations and movements through different platforms.
- Utilising donor communication channels and networks to disseminate the knowledge, tools, and experiences, as well as the results of different YFOMs.
- Advocating for, supporting, and resourcing young feminist participation in national and international fora.

Meaningfully engage young feminists in the development of policy and practice

Recognise and integrate YFOMs' perspectives into donor policy and practice at all levels, including when designing and developing programmes, framing calls for proposals, and during the implementation and evaluation of projects. Creating space and investing time and resources to learn about the visions, aspirations, and challenges of the young feminists – whether already funded by the donor or not – will strengthen relationships and improve the relevance and outcomes of any programme designed to support the work of youth-and-girl-led feminist organisations. All engagement with young people should be led by staff that have experience supporting meaningful gender-sensitive youth participation, and young people should be compensated for their time, ideas, and expertise.

Count young feminists as equal partners for social change

Recognise the contribution YFOMs make as equal partners of social change, rather than just implementers of grants with limited agency and power. This powershift is urgent and challenges adultism that permeates development and humanitarian sectors. This requires donors to share power and build trust with young feminist and youth-led organisations, including by creating space for open, empathetic, and respectful two-way dialogue throughout the grant making process and project lifecycles. One approach to this could be to consider co-creating with the groups of young people donors want to fund when designing a new grant to resource youth action to ensure that grants are relevant to their priorities and respond to the political and social contexts that different YFOMs operate in.

Shift more and better financial resources through inclusive and accountable grant making processes

Make more flexible, multi-year, funding available and accessible to YFOMs

Increase funding for gender equality overall, and significantly increase its availability and accessibility to YFOMs and women's rights organisations working to deliver locally based and community driven projects. This funding needs to be sustainable to support long-term engagement with communities and the growth of the feminist movement.

To increase the pool of resources available to youth-led and young feminist organisations, donors may need to innovate, take more calculated risks, and adopt different criteria to assess relevant experience, impact, and success. It would require donors designing specific grants that are accessible to girl-and-youth-led organisations and other feminist organisations, and in-line with their existing priorities. Funding should be flexible and designed to facilitate young people's self-led and self-organised work in ways that can adapt and respond to uncertain and changing external environments and community needs.

Targeted grant making could avoid the challenges of larger national and international organisations competing for and undermining the ability of YFOMs and WROs to access funding directly.

To increase transparency and accountability, donors should also consider developing an indicator(s) to measure the amount of funding that is being allocated to young feminist organisations and movements.

Adopt youth-friendly application processes

Adopt youth-friendly application and reporting processes that reduce the entry barriers that many young organisations face. Efforts to decolonise application processes include the removal of technical and bureaucratic language, English jargon and expectations of technical skills that are unfairly prioritised by many donors, primarily based in the Global North. Instead, application processes could aim to collect only essential information and requirements needed to inform grant decisions. Efforts should also be made to expand the range of languages in which it is possible to present proposals. These could be gathered through a range of mediums to capture information, such as video, to eliminate advantages based on English proficiency or proposal writing. Information on funding opportunities should be disseminated widely through youth networks, accompanied by supporting youth-friendly materials and guides that can help YFOMs navigate donor requirements.

Adopt youth-friendly reporting processes

Implement grantee-centred reporting processes that move away from a focus on traditional partnership agreements and reporting processes towards less burdensome processes that reduce the unsustainable pressure placed on implementing organisations. Changes in reporting requirements could include the use of participatory reporting through ongoing 'current conversations' in lieu of a final narrative and financial report, rather than a requirement to produce multiple interim reports that drain organisational capacity away from implementation. Reporting could also be in more flexible and open formats or through different media, such as short videos. These are all viable options already practised by different donors and serve to make grant recipients feel more trusted as equal partners.

Consider approaches that increase access to funding via feminist and/or youth-friendly intermediaries

Over the long-term, work to simplify currently complex funding processes, procedures and requirements that are inaccessible to, and exclude, many YFOMs. As an interim step, however, donors should channel significantly more funding through specialised feminist intermediaries and funds, as well as intermediaries that work directly with youth and girl-led organisations and groups. Such intermediaries (e.g., children's and women's funds such as Astrea Foundation, Fondo Semillas, Leading from the South etc.) can effectively involve local organisations in flexible funding processes and support YFOMs through capacity strengthening initiatives so they can flourish. This requires funders and intermediaries working better together, organising themselves so that they take the burden off girls and young feminists to navigate this complex and elusive funding ecosystem.

Identify opportunities and pathways to fund unregistered and informal collectives

Recognise girl and youth-led groups, networks, informal collectives, and organisations without a need for them to register formally and identify ways to include them in funding processes (including via intermediaries). This could mean redesigning funding processes to make them more flexible and accessible, based on principles of trust in young feminist organisations and movements. Targeted outreach or seeking support from sub-granting bodies could help overcome some of procurement burdens on donors, making it easier to effectively access and resource unregistered or smaller youth-and-girl-led organisations.

Increase non-financial support and resources to strengthen youth-and-girl-led feminist organisations and movements

Provide non-financial support and youth-centred capacity strengthening

In addition to flexible funds, funders should provide non-financial support in the form of girl and youth-centred capacity strengthening. This support, which could include access to mentoring and network building opportunities, access to decision-making and other influencing spaces, and physical assets such as office space, is key to sustaining girls' and youth movements. Young feminists that participated in this research were also eager to learn and develop fundraising and grant management skills through capacity strengthening workshops, mentoring programs, and peer-learning spaces.

Support peer learning and inter-generational dialogue

Donors should co-create with young leaders inclusive and non-hierarchical spaces where young people and young feminist organisations can meet with their peers, as well as adult-led women's rights organisations, to aid peer-learning, capacity strengthening, and collective strategising and cross-pollination of ideas around common issues and approaches. Donors can support (and engage in) these intergenerational dialogues as a contribution to strengthening feminist movements, as well as to strengthen mutual accountability. Small group meetings, including in less official settings, can enhance the participation of groups suffering discrimination and security issues, while enabling them to talk about their work more openly.

Security, safety and well being

Donors must support the wellbeing and safety of YFOMs and girl-led groups who are advocating and delivering projects at the frontlines. Young feminists need space to process and support their psychosocial health, particularly when dealing with the systemic violence against them, working on controversial issues, or in complex contexts. This is especially the case for girls advocating in countries where there are conflicts and unstable political systems.

Annex 1: Glossary of terms

- **Adultism:** it refers to behaviours and attitudes based on the assumptions that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon them without agreement. This attitude is inscribed in and reinforced by laws, customs, and norms of society.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is “the capacity to make strategic choices by those who have previously been denied this capacity. These choices do not reproduce, and may actively challenge, structures of inequality in the society” (Kabeer 2016, 3).
- **Feminisms:** a theoretical and activist movement that is opposed to all forms of sexism (Hooks 1984). Feminism is not and cannot be unique, since sexist expressions vary depending on the identity, social context, and geographical politics (Byrne and Imma 2019).
- **Intersectionality:** It is a way of thinking about identity and its power relationship (Crenshaw 2015). Intersectional feminism centres on the voices of those experiencing overlapping forms of oppression to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context (UN Women 2020).
- **Institutional donors:** we refer to governmental donors and bilateral aid agencies that systemically give grants.
- **Participatory grantmaking:** it is a process which cedes decision-making power about who and how to give funding to the very communities that funders aim to serve. It empowers and gives agency to those communities to determine the priorities of their lives (Gibson 2019).
- **Women’s funds:** are philanthropic organisations governed by women, whose main objective is to provide financial support to women-led and girl-led organisations (Global Fund for Women 2022; Gillespie 2019).
- **Women’s Rights Organisations (WRO):** women-led organised groups.
- **Young Feminist Organisations and Movements (YFOMs),** we have chosen to adopt this terminology when referring to girl-and-youth-led organisations working on gender equality, from a feminist perspective, to reflect and include the diversity of feminist youth organising. YFOMs include, but are not limited to:
 - **Young feminist organisations,** we refer to legally and not legally registered adolescent girls and girl-led and girl-centred organisations

which work with a feminist approach or on the main topics of the feminist agenda.

- **Young feminist movements**, we refer to organised groups and collectives of feminist adolescent girls and girls, working together with a common agenda around gender issues. This definition includes all the diverse feminist movements that create, push for, and drive forward change that is inclusive of and supports people from diverse identities and backgrounds.
- **Girls Rights Organisations (GROs)** are girl-led organised groups with a human right, gender, or/and feminist agenda. These include young women and girls in all their diversity, including trans girls.
- **Young Women and Girls** in all their diversity, including transgender girls and young women.
- **Young people:** persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (UN, n.d.).

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