

Resourcing Girls to Thrive

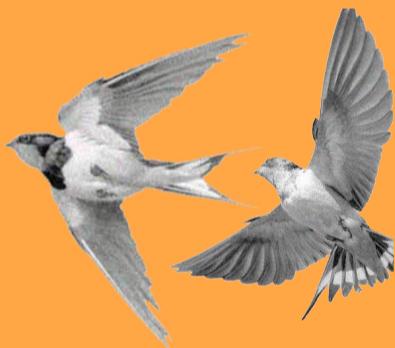


Research exploring funding for
adolescent girls' rights
2023



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Working Group

The working group for this research was an intentional grouping of individuals and institutions representing multiple entry points into the adolescent girls funding field that advised the research. The working group held the research process together with the research team to help shape the research, review the state of the adolescent girls funding landscape, and promote the research findings and recommendations. From December 2020 — September 2021, the following individuals contributed to the research as working group members:

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- Jody Myrum, Independent
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Gratitude



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Glossary

Adolescent girls: Actors in the landscape do not share an understanding of who is an adolescent girl. Most commonly ‘adolescent girls’ are defined through the lenses of sex and age, with age ranges varying across the landscape. Adolescent girls are also understood as people who self-identify as girls, including transgender girls, and thus face similar discrimination, oppression and exclusion in their communities and more broadly in society. Some feminist funders recognize that age and gender identity are an incomplete understanding of adolescent girls across different contexts, and even how girls self-identify as adult, as child, or as an adolescent can change fluidly and be based on different situations and circumstances in their lives. Therefore, this research was broadly inclusive of all of these definitions so as to gain a fuller understanding of the funding landscape.

Feminist adolescent girls funder: Criteria developed for this research includes:

- Commitment to feminist principles, practices, and aspirations
- Commitment to funding adolescent girls (including girl-led, young feminist led, or adult-led work) is explicit and financially backed
- Specific funding for adolescent girls is currently tracked, or soon to be tracked

- Adolescent girls’ agency and voice are considerations in funding; they are not only passive beneficiaries of programs
- A range of participatory models are employed to engage girls at different levels of program design and/or decision-making and/or evaluation

Feminist funding ecosystem: A feminist funding ecosystem reveals a web of connectivity between movements, funders, and larger funding flows and makes a fundamental distinction between direct funding — money that reaches movements — and money that could reach movements but does not. See chapter 6 for feminist *adolescent girls* funding ecosystem.

Feminist funding framework: A conceptual foundation describing a feminist approach to funding and programming. A feminist funding framework recognizes girls’ agency and power by engaging girls to identify the priorities and make funding decisions; flowing resources to girl-led and girl-centered formal organizations and informal groups; and going beyond grantmaking to strengthen capacity. The focus is on core, flexible funding that responds to girls’ needs and centers their experiences.

Girl-centered work: Work that is generally understood as an approach to designing programming that involves girls in the process, so that programming responds to the unique and gendered realities and situations of girls. The leadership of girl-centered work is often not girls.

Girl-led work: Work that is led by girls as individuals or as groups that are founded and led by girls. Girls and their groups often have adult allies and mentors to support them — but the work is unambiguously run by girls.

Intersectional funding: “Grant-making that takes into consideration the ways in which multiple systems of oppression are interwoven in people’s lives, communities, cultures, and institutions and how they impact people differently based on where each person sits and their lived experience.”¹

Protectionist framework: A conceptual foundation that portrays girls and children overall as dependent, vulnerable and at risk of abuse and articulates that because children lack the capacity to care for themselves they require the protection of adults to ensure their proper growth and development (e.g. girls as beneficiaries).

Transformational funding framework: A conceptual foundation that acknowledges the systemic oppressions that perpetuate inequality. Instead of viewing girls only as beneficiaries of particular services or programs, transformational funding frameworks recognize girls’ political agency and voice, flowing resources directly to girls and/or their allies to challenge and transform power relations and structures.

Transformational funding practices: Some examples of transformational funding practices include:

- Prioritizing flexibility and funding core support
- Trusting girls as experts of their own lived realities
- Finding ways to decentralize power and decisions to ensure girls are connected to decision-making processes
- Communicating with transparency and clarity about funding limitations and requirements
- Partnering with other funders, seeking to overcome limitations or barriers ■

1 Journey Towards Intersectional Grantmaking (2018), *Funders for a Just Economy*, <https://www.nfg.org/resources/journey-towards-intersectional-grant-making>, accessed March 1, 2022.

Research summary

About this research

Working within feminist, women's rights movements and adolescent girls' and young feminist activism, it was evident to the research team that the funding landscape for adolescent girls is not well understood or developed. Searching for the money that flows to adolescent girls often feels like wandering a valley floor within the mountains, crossing a stream every now and then, and seeing only the features of the landscape within the immediate view. The larger picture and its interconnectedness is obscured, shrouded by the lack of clear and consistent data and tracking, like

an incomplete map. Despite adolescent girls being a unique population, there is a disconnect between girls' expressed needs, and the resources flowing for their work and activism. This was corroborated by funders who resource adolescent girls from a feminist perspective and see girls as political actors — and so this research was commissioned. It seeks to offer sensemaking of the adolescent girls' funding landscape to stimulate a conversation and reflection about how to resource adolescent girls to thrive. It does so using a feminist approach to funding adolescent girls as the way to bring about long-lasting transformation in their lives as the point of departure.



Methodologies included four workshops with 31 girls (8 countries), a survey and two workshops with 13 feminist girls' funders, complemented by a literature review (49 resources), public data review of 71 actors, six data collecting entities, and 21 key informant interviews. All of the findings from these methods were then further sensemade through virtual workshops and desk reviews with nine Working Group members. More details on the methodologies can be found in annex 4.

Research findings

Girls' experiences navigating the funding landscape

Girls stated that resources are difficult to identify and access, and they expressed minimal understanding of funder requirements. Girls also said they needed to conform to an adult way of being, changing how they present themselves and their work to be accepted in the formal, adult world. Frustration was expressed by girls that some of the funders supporting their work did little to develop relationships of trust, and the resultant lack of proximity to their realities led to a deep chasm between girls' work and the funders' understanding of it. Girls' also felt their agency and power was overlooked: they want to be included in the processes that seek to communicate their work, and more so to be afforded the visibility, representation and voice in decision-making that is so critical to meet their needs.

Tracking the money

This part of the research process attempted to understand the amounts and distributions of all funding towards adolescent girls, and the related politics and practices. The most important finding of the research is also the most frustrating — namely, **that the existing funding data infrastructure cannot fully answer the overarching question — *Where is the money for adolescent girls?***

Historically, very limited funding has been directed toward adolescents. Since the turn of the century, funding to adolescents in general has increased somewhat, particularly for girls' programming. But it is unclear whether this funding responds to adolescent girls' needs. The challenge girls funding advocates face today is strikingly similar to the gap faced by women's rights in 1995. There is now a clearer picture of the actors, amounts and modalities of funding for women's rights, accompanied by advocacy processes to ensure



women and gender non-conforming people benefit from more and better transformational resources. Adolescent girls, however, have slipped through the cracks. **The women's rights field did not make an age distinction, lumping girls in with women. Meanwhile the children's rights field at that time did not make gender distinctions, effectively making adolescent girls invisible in both fields — a dynamic that has only just begun to improve.**

With this in mind, six data collecting and processing entities and 71 institutions were looked at within the adolescent girls funding landscape. What was discovered were four interconnected limitations that prevented the tracking of actual funding amounts flowing toward adolescent girls:

1. Lack of transparent reporting by funders across the landscape
2. Adolescent girls are not counted as a unique population in most funding data, which is not commonly disaggregated by age and gender
3. Funders each develop their own taxonomies, or classification frameworks, which are not collectively shared across the landscape. The result is a jumble of categories, classifications and terms
4. Methods used to develop datasets have broad implications for who can access both the data itself and the resources required to understand and act on it

Understanding these limitations is important, as they reveal opportunities

for collaboration across funding networks to track the money and can help inform a more effective funding ecosystem.

Landscaping funding for adolescent girls

With the data limitations above surfacing both challenges and opportunities, the research turned to sensemaking of the **key actors** in the adolescent girls funding landscape and the **funding streams** that are formed by the priorities they choose. The lack of clear, consistent and trackable data made it extremely difficult to answer even the most fundamental questions about *who is doing the spending, and how much are they disbursing? And, who is the funding going to and for what?* Thus, to help answer those questions, a taxonomy — an organized data tracking proposal — was developed to create a framework and common language for the analysis. While this did not solve the overarching data problem it did provide a framework for the available data and information, as well as a point of departure for the scaffolding of a girls funding ecosystem.

Understanding how actors are shaping the landscape

The funder landscape for adolescent girls is complex, with a multiplicity of actors entering with differing politics and approaches. For this research, actors were organized into three groupings, noting that within each of the groupings there is diversity as well:

- **Source funders** are actors that do not need to fundraise from other sources and often have large amounts of resources, like bilaterals and private foundations, thus termed source funders
- **Intermediary funders** are actors that need to fundraise, such as multilaterals like the United Nations agencies, INGOs, and children's and women's funds
- **Funder collaborations** are groups of actors brought together around particular funding priorities or strategies; groups can be a diversity of actors or similar to one another

The research then looked at the available public data to discern the frameworks, issues, strategies, practices, and decision-making models that different actors favor. The vast majority of funding flows through the landscape in a way that situates girls only as beneficiaries and offers restricted or project-based funding which most often does not reach girls directly, whereas only some funding flows in transformational ways. The issues that tend to receive the most attention from funders are health, safety/violence prevention, and economic empowerment, with the most mentioned strategies being advocacy, organizing and evidence generation. More often than not the funders with the most resources and influence — such as source funders, multilaterals and some large INGOs — do not adopt a transformational framework to funding for girls. Unsurprisingly, these funders are also the furthest away from girl-led organizing and activism, and this can translate to programming that is unreflective of girls' needs.

The majority of the transformational funding that reaches girls flows from intermediary funders. While there is a wide range of intermediary funders, what unites them is their unique potential to influence source funders and, like alchemists, transform vague or disconnected funding strategies into programs that deliver deep impact for girls. **Interestingly, because funders regularly communicate their frameworks, but to a much lesser extent their funding practices, the research could not determine the full extent to which frameworks are matched by practices.** Funders, however, who embrace transformational practices, such as general operating, core/flexible, or multi-year support, are more likely to promote them. Funder collaborations can offer a learning environment that enables them to experiment with new ways of working. They present a unique opportunity within the landscape to explore cultivating a more feminist funding ecosystem for adolescent girls.

Understanding how funding streams shape the landscape

Analyzing the landscape by grouping funders into 'actor types' proved to be limiting. **Within each grouping of actors, political framings were diverse and within one institution there can be multiple entry points to the adolescent girls funding landscape, each with differing political framings and related practices.** Thus, analyzing the funding landscape by issue, intervention, and population funding

streams, opened up a new perspective into the landscape. Funding streams are the result of the decisions funders make about how and where to spend their resources — and ultimately what impact they seek to make in the world. Adolescent girls can be located in multiple funding streams. Likewise, funders rarely flow all their funds through one stream, but spread their funding across multiple streams. This research identified three broad categories of funding streams for adolescent girls, each with sub-categories (see below). Unpacking the funding flows like this has revealed that adolescent girls are rarely seen as political actors, and are mostly framed as beneficiaries. With increasing interest in resourcing adolescent girls as a population, there is a **real opportunity for introducing transformational funding frameworks, influencing funding distributions to grassroots actors and promoting girls' agency within funding flows.**

Populations, such as women, children and youth. In these streams, data parameters vary greatly: for example, disaggregating adolescent girls within each population is almost nonexistent, and so their needs are lost or overlooked. While funding for adolescent girls can be found in the women's funding stream, the frameworks that recognize girls as political actors are far less resourced than other frameworks within this funding stream. Children's funding represents a massive share of money and power, with some of the major actors using more protectionist, development-type framing in regards to

adolescent girls. In the meantime, the children's funding field's frameworks are continuously expanding and nuancing rights and justice.

Issues, such as health, education, child marriage, safety and violence prevention. Funders in these streams tend to adopt economic development frameworks and flow more restricted, project-based funding to large international organizations rather than flexible funding to local organizations. Girls usually have little say in how funding is used, and yet these are issues girls say are critically important to their lives. Health funding, for example, gets significant attention but is predominantly centered on healthy pregnancy and child survival and often focuses on the ways this can be achieved in service to the economic prosperity of nations. Sexual and reproductive health rights is on the agenda, but very little funding is flowing to sexual health and rights.

Intervention, including humanitarian, development and movement building. These streams have significant resources — mostly flowing through the development stream. Development financing however, is driven by and aligns with the agendas of national governments in the global North and their changing priorities. In the development and humanitarian streams, funding flows toward girls on a political continuum, becoming highly politically charged at times when introducing a transformational framework.

The movement building funding stream differs radically, however. Most movement building funders are private foundations and women's funds, with a few governments — Ireland, Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands — also beginning to make it a priority. These funders enter the landscape with a social justice strategy and transformational framework. Funding for the success of movement agendas — encompassing different geographies, intersections and connections with other issues or movements — is at the nascent stage. Those who do fund it offer flexible, core funding, and are often intentional about subverting power structures that are inhibiting girls' work.

Learning from feminist funders resourcing adolescent girls

Feminist funders and framings are present in multiple funding streams and are affecting important change with their transformational funding frameworks. Thirteen funders were engaged to help the researchers understand how feminist funders flow resources to adolescent girls, and what they have learned that might help other funders deliver more transformational funding. **Feminist funders who support adolescent girls do not yet wield significant resources relative to other funders in the landscape, but their novel strategies show how a feminist approach to funding recognizes power dynamics and girls' agency and voice.**

Firstly, feminist funders recognize girls' agency and power in their funding practices by engaging girls to identify priorities and make funding decisions. They also flow resources to girl-centered and girl-led organizations, including collectives and unregistered groups, and provide relatively unrestricted grants that cover their core costs. Secondly, feminist funders strengthen capacity through both grants and practices such as organizational development and relationship-building to address power imbalances. They look beyond their own organizations to improve the funding landscape for girls through philanthropic advocacy with other funders. Finally, feminist funders recognize the power they hold as an actor with financial resources and the need to deconstruct and address the power dynamics in their own practices. This includes finding creative ways to ensure they hear and respond to girls as they express the realities of their daily lives and identify their needs.

Moving toward a feminist funding ecosystem

Our analysis of the data infrastructure and two different entry points to understanding the landscape — the actors and funding streams — led us to the conclusion that a **coherent adolescent girls funding field does not yet exist.** Our research scaffolds a feminist

adolescent girls' funding ecosystem and presents ways that actors within the landscape can begin to move beyond this report, toward a coherent system of transformative resource flows toward girls. The research team has seen that when actors are accountable to girls, center their needs and priorities, and recognize girls' intersectional identities, transformative change happens. **This research is our offering to all actors who are interested in creating a world where adolescent girls can thrive.**

Scaffolding a feminist adolescent girls funding ecosystem

Girls' descriptions of a funding ecosystem where they can thrive, and the lessons from feminist funders that are already doing transformational work, informed scaffolding for a new, feminist ecosystem that has four principles:

- **Accountable to adolescent girls:** Girls' intersectional identities are recognized and hold power within decision-making processes
- **Vibrant:** A healthy ecosystem relies on multiple actors and streams with the agility to change and adapt to shifting contexts and different environments with little rigidity
- **Coordinated and complementary:** This ecosystem is well coordinated, where actors make complementary contributions within their niche such that competition is not present

- **Collectivism:** Actors internalize collective end goals as their own, with individual institutional goals contributing toward them

Grounded in the above principles, ecosystem interactions are such that girls are thriving. The ecosystem recognizes and centers them — **girls want a say in every aspect of their lives.** In this ecosystem, girls are recognized not just by age, but also by their **self-determined intersecting identities.** Financial resources flow throughout this ecosystem in accountable and responsive ways. Significant flexible funding is flowing to collective girls' organizing and ally organizations that center girls and fully recognize their agency in this ecosystem. Girls' expertise is valued and funding is responsive to their expressed needs and priorities. Because girls are recognized as political actors instead of beneficiaries, girls have a role in decision-making over resources. All actors find ways to deepen their accountability and responsiveness to girls' lived realities, by:

- Prioritizing flexibility and funding core support
- Trusting girls as experts of their own lived realities
- Finding ways to decentralize power and decisions to ensure girls are connected to decision-making processes
- Communicating with transparency and clarity about funding limitations and requirements
- Partnering with other funders, seeking to overcome limitations or barriers

Beyond this report

Recognizing that **this research is a starting point** — not a conclusive analysis. For it to affect change toward a transformative funding ecosystem, the aim is to catalyze more thinking and deeper research as well as collective conversations, including with adolescent girls. What follows are some suggestions for moving beyond this report, especially among funders interested in doing transformational work with and for adolescent girls:

- Convene across funders and *with* girls
- Research to deepen understanding of the landscape through:
 - ▶ In-depth analysis of the funding streams
 - ▶ In-depth analysis of institutional dynamics
 - ▶ Program funding research: This research primarily looked at direct funding (grantmaking) support towards adolescent girls; not at programmatic budgets of institutions working directly with and prioritizing adolescent girls
 - ▶ Government contributions research: Examining particular governments' funding was beyond the scope of this research
- Engage in mutual advocacy and learning between feminist and other funders. Collaborative structures and spaces are needed for funders learning how to recognize adolescent girls as a constituency and resource them ■



Introduction





Definition Box 1. Adolescent girls

Actors in the landscape do not share an understanding of who is an adolescent girl. Most commonly ‘adolescent girls’ are defined through the lenses of sex and age, more specifically ages 8-19 or 12-19 years. Adolescent girls are also understood as people who self-identify as girls, including transgender girls, and thus face similar discrimination, oppression and exclusion in their communities and more broadly in society. Some feminist funders recognize that age and gender identity are an incomplete understanding of adolescent girls across different contexts, and even how girls self-identify as adult, as child, or as an adolescent can change fluidly and be based on different situations and circumstances in their lives. This research was broadly inclusive of all of these definitions so as to gain a broader understanding of the funding landscape.

The intentionality of resourcing adolescent girls as distinct from women, children and youth is more present than ever in the current funding landscape.² The funding landscape is, however, not well developed or understood in terms of who the funders are, the amounts and distributions of funding, and to what extent adolescent girls themselves are present across the funding landscape intended for them.

The pages that follow are the result of a research effort that aimed to fill in these significant gaps in the funding landscape and **provide critical insights for funders, policy-makers and practitioners who want to support and deliver transformational programs for adolescent girls** (see Definition Box 1).³ This research was commissioned by funders who approach adolescent girls from a feminist perspective and see girls as political actors. Thus, the research’s **unique contribution and departure point is a feminist approach to funding adolescent girls** as the way to bring about long-lasting transformation in their lives.

Perhaps the most important finding of our work is also the most frustrating: namely, that the existing funding data infrastructure cannot fully answer our overarching question — *Where is the*

money for adolescent girls? The report unpacks the causes for this dynamic, which includes a lack of transparency by institutional funders in reporting funding data. To this end, we offer ideas for building a more effective, inclusive and transparent funding ecosystem — one that works for funders and for girls.

2 The terms ‘girls’ and ‘adolescent girls’ are used interchangeably throughout this report, as such use of the term ‘girls’ throughout this report refers to ‘adolescent girls’.

3 The period of data collection spanned June 2020 – June 2021.

Not surprisingly, understanding a funding landscape that does not track the money proved challenging, even for such basic tasks as identifying and explaining the key actors and the funding streams they prioritized (and those they overlooked). To fill in as many missing pieces as possible, our research sought to create a broad landscape analysis that forms the heart of this report, focusing first on the actors, their behaviors and positioning within the landscape; and second on the funding streams they prioritize and the impact this has on adolescent girls. To do this, we developed a taxonomy to create a framework and common language for the analysis. This analysis is by no means exhaustive, and further research is needed to create understanding of the areas we did not cover, such as spending by national governments. Including additional actors in the dataset while using the taxonomy we developed would also provide for a broader field analysis.

Including the voices of adolescent girls as well as those working with them from transformational feminist perspectives was an important premise guiding this research. Throughout the research, adolescent girls and their allies communicated the lack of transparency and accountability among funders in

the landscape and found it difficult to understand funding amounts, distributions and purposes. This dynamic makes it difficult for girls and their allies to understand how to access funding and hold funders accountable. **Girls consulted as part of the research process echoed what so many girls have said in other forums and reports: their needs are being addressed as adults understand them, rather than as girls express them.**^{4,5} The resulting disconnect often leads to programs that either miss out on the potential to transform girls' lives or in some cases do actual harm by leaving girls trapped in existing systems of oppression.

The report thus has a dual purpose: first, to define the features of the current funding landscape, including its limitations; and second, to offer the initial scaffolding of a feminist funding ecosystem that centers girls and enables them to thrive. In this way, **the report aims to equip feminist funders with data, insights and learning to move the larger adolescent girls funding community forward toward more transformational funding for adolescent girls.**

The report is divided into three sections and seven chapters. In each chapter, we summarize the key points, lessons and insights before going into detail.

4 FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund and Mama Cash (2018), Girls to the Front: A snapshot of girl-led organizing, https://youngfeministfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/GirlsToTheFront_Report_web.pdf.

5 FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund (2019), No Straight Lines: Transformations with young feminist organisers, <http://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/>.



Section 1

Locating girls in funding processes and data infrastructure

Defining the current moment for girls: An overview of how adolescent girls see the funding ecosystem that is intended to support them, based on insights gathered at workshops and interviews with girls themselves. This chapter also includes how current political, social and philanthropic trends are impacting funders, advocates and girls themselves.

Tracking the money: A deep-dive into the challenges and limitations of identifying funding flows for adolescent girls — and how we worked to get the best data available. This chapter reveals opportunities for collaboration across the landscape for funders to increase the transparency of how — and how much — they invest in adolescent girls.



Section 2

Landscaping funding for adolescent girls

Understanding how actors are shaping the landscape: An overview of the different types of funders in the landscape, as well as the frameworks, issues, strategies, practices, and decision-making models that shape it. This chapter also includes illustrative examples of funders in our sample.

Understanding how funding streams shape the landscape: An analysis of three broad categories of funding streams (and the distinct funding streams in each) based on the population group, issue area, or intervention type toward which funders directed their funding.

Learning from feminist funders resourcing adolescent girls: A special focus on self-identified feminist adolescent girl funders and their potential to move the broader funding field. Their experiences and data are presented, followed by a deeper look at how funders understand adolescent girls' agency and how that relates to their practices.



Section 3

Moving toward a feminist funding ecosystem

Scaffolding a feminist funding ecosystem where adolescent girls can thrive: This chapter presents a high-level scaffolding for a funding system that would put girls and their expressed needs at the center of resource flows and decision-making. This chapter includes practical recommendations for funders, policy-makers and advocates to build more transparent and transformative strategies to help girls thrive.

Beyond this report: The report closes with suggestions for moving forward, especially for funders interested in doing transformational work with and for adolescent girls.

The authors, advisors and funders of this report hope it fills important gaps in understanding how funding is flowing to adolescent girls and how constructive changes in the funding ecosystem might lead to better outcomes for girls. Significant progress has been made in the last 20 years, but vexing challenges — as well as real opportunities for transformation — lay ahead as the following pages describe. ■



Section 1

Locating girls in funding processes and data infrastructure





CHAPTER 1

Defining the current moment for girls

Understanding the current reality in which girls are living was an essential step in grounding this research, both practically and politically. Toward that end, this chapter unpacks two related areas of inquiry. First, what girls themselves are experiencing and thinking about the funding ecosystem that intends to assist them; and second, the larger political, social and philanthropic trends that are impacting adolescent girls and the organizations that support them.

To understand what girls are experiencing and thinking, we collaborated with two organizations from our Working Group that are directly funding girl-led work — Purposeful and Plan International. We conducted four separate workshops with 31 girls aged 13-20 years who are living in Palestine, Yemen, Jordan, Guatemala, Brazil, Morocco, Sudan, and Sierra Leone.⁶

Key Messages

- **Funding information for girls is lacking:** The majority of funders flowing resources toward girls, with the exception of a very few, do not see adolescent girls as an audience
- **Funders are often disconnected from girls' realities:** Girls are frustrated with the disconnect between what funders share about girls' work, and the actual realities of the work they do
- **Girls' agency and power is being overlooked:** Girls want to be included in decision-making processes and afforded visibility, representation and voice
- **Recognize adolescent girls are not adults:** Girls find they need to conform to an adult way of being, changing how they present themselves and their work, to be accepted in the funding landscape
- **Adolescent girls' work is diverse:** Girls want funders to prioritize making funds available for different kinds of girl-led and girl-centered groups

Additionally, we undertook an extensive literature review to supplement the workshop findings and illuminate how adolescent girls' are navigating the funding landscape in the current moment (more information on our methodologies can be found in annex 4). From the workshops and literature review, what

6 These locations represent those where Purposeful and Plan International were providing direct grants to girls at the time of the workshops.

we are offering is an opening that may resonate with others and can be further nuanced and deepened in each context and through lived experiences.

In the workshops, the **girls shared that financial and non-financial resources are difficult to identify and access, and they expressed minimal understanding of funder requirements.** Our landscape review found that the majority of funders flowing resources toward girls, with the exception of a very few, do not see adolescent girls as an audience in their external communications. Funders are generally failing to communicate transparently and in ways that create accountability to girls. Funding amounts, who can access funding, and if funding is indeed even available for girls to access and how they can apply is rarely found in the public domain.

In the workshops **girls expressed frustration with the disconnect between what funders communicate about their work, and girls' realities.** Furthermore, girls reported that they felt their participation in funding and programming processes was typically tokenistic, not substantive, which is consistent with surveys of many young people over the years when asked about their experience with development programs. Girls noted that local governments and other funders often did not fulfill promises of access to funding for their work.

This is often tied to grantmakers lacking the most basic understanding of girls'

realities, as reported by the girls. The funders girls were speaking of during the workshops did little to monitor projects or build relationships of trust with project leaders. By the end of the project period, funders' expectations of results were no longer aligned with realities of how the project unfolded — creating a deep disconnect between girls and the funders' understanding of the work that was done. This disconnect is also associated with funders telling impact stories on behalf of girls, without allowing girls to help shape the stories and make them visible in their own communities. While many funders are not well positioned to (and arguably should not) be in direct relationship with adolescent girls, all funders should see girls as an essential stakeholder, recognize that girls' realities are complex and their plans need flexibility, and that communicating the results of girls' work should be a shared effort.

Adolescent girls are asking for more decision-making power in the funding ecosystem. Across the workshops and in reports and studies that consult girls on how their needs are being met and their experiences of funding relationships, girls consistently outline that they want a role in determining funding decisions — not just in funding implementation. In addition, they want to know how the work that has been funded is carried forward to inform future funding.

Essentially, girls are asking for the same things youth and women's rights activists have advocated for in recent



Definition Box 2: Girl-led and girl-centered work

Girl-led work is led by girls as individuals or as groups that are founded and led by girls. Girls and their groups often have adult allies and mentors to support them — but the work is unambiguously run by girls.

Girl-centered work is generally understood as an approach to programming that involves girls in the processes, so that programming responds to the unique and gendered realities and situations of girls throughout a program cycle. The leadership of girl-centered work is often not girls.

years: inclusion in decision-making processes plus visibility, representation and voice. While girls are not unique in this request, they seemingly face greater barriers to accessing spaces and being taken seriously as valid and valuable contributors and decision-makers, because they are young and female.

Furthermore, **adolescent girls find that they need to conform to an adult way of being, changing how they present themselves and their work to be accepted in the formal, adult world.** This is especially problematic because girls already feel that funders do not grasp the reality of their lives. Adding to this, the burden of having to conform to an adult narrative and sublimate their true lived realities to unlock funding, girls often become deeply dispirited and lose faith in funders' sincerity and processes.

While funders are more aware than ever that adolescent populations are diverse, **girls want them to prioritize making funds available for different kinds of girl-led and girl-centered groups** (see Definition Box 2), including those with diverse identities and a wide range of focus areas.

What girls said in the workshops echoes what we found in the literature review (see annex 1). Girls are keenly aware that a majority of funders are far away from the places where they fund. The complex contexts in which girls live their daily lives are perhaps even more removed from the funder's knowledge and experiences.

Girls feel powerless to cross this deep chasm and get funders to even listen to their self-identified needs, let alone allow them to use funds to address these needs. Even in cases where funders operate under a feminist funding framework (see Definition Box 3) and provide flexible, core funding, adolescent girls still feel they must present their projects in a light that will be attractive to a funder. Girls know funding is scarce and competition is real, so to secure funding they often abandon original plans informed by their self-identified needs and propose a project more likely to find favor, but less likely to deliver transformational impact.



The second area of inquiry for this chapter is to unpack the larger political, social and philanthropic trends that are impacting adolescent girls and the organizations that support them. It has been sobering to conduct this research at a time when significant contextual shifts are impacting all aspects of society and daily life, while at the same time disrupting systems — including the one we aim to understand — in multiple ways. Between COVID-19, global economic downturn, shifts in philanthropy and multilateral processes, growing movements for racial justice and climate action, and rising momentum of anti-“gender ideology” and anti rights groups, the current context is complex and fraught with uncertainty. This global moment has introduced new filters for identifying priorities and profound changes in what kind of information is valuable and what strategies are effective. **Rapidly changing landscapes have the potential to create an immense opportunity for shaping a new reality with multiple voices across sectors, placing girls as political actors and decision-makers at the center.**

One reason for optimism is that in the midst of the pandemic, many funders started experimenting with providing

Definition Box 3: Feminist funding framework

Frameworks that recognize girls’ agency and power by engaging girls to identify the priorities and make funding decisions; flowing resources to girl-led and girl-centered formal organizations and informal groups; and going beyond grantmaking to strengthen capacity. The focus is on core, flexible funding that responds to girls’ needs and centers their experiences.

more flexible funding and participatory grantmaking approaches.⁷ The context of multiple and intersecting crises has been a catalyst for funders to extend beyond their comfort zones and explore moving money in new ways, including giving general operating support and unrestricted funds, establishing pop-up rapid response funds, or even direct cash transfers. Girls, children and youth-led decision-making in philanthropy is arguably on the rise with specific examples of adolescent girls decision-making such as FRIDA’s Girl Advisory, Global Fund for Women’s Adolescent Girls Advisory Council, and the Girl Advisory of the With and For Girls Fund at Purposeful.

7 Over 500 members coming from across Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and the United States (US) are coming together in a community of practice around participatory grantmaking. <https://www.participatorygrantmaking.org>.

Despite these shifts, adolescent girls say they continue to face limited access to funding for their own work and are unable to influence the majority of funding flows toward girls.

Another defining trend of the moment is that new actors are stepping forward while previous stalwarts of girls' funding have pulled back decisively. The NoVo Foundation's departure from the adolescent girls funding field, for example, has left a considerable gap in the amount of flexible and long-term feminist funding for adolescent girls' rights. NoVo Foundation invested significant resources in their adolescent girl programs for more than a decade, and in most years was the single largest private funder of such work. While new funder collaboratives are emerging, bringing new actors to the table to work together and learn as a community, most have not yet secured resources from new source funders, and thus new money has not yet come into the field.

One example of funders coming together around a critical moment is the Global Resilience Fund, a pop-up funding collaboration, which seeks "to better understand what young feminist activists need in this critical moment,

*while documenting what it takes to hold collaborative and participatory funding processes through a pandemic and beyond."*⁸ The Global Resilience Fund is a collaborative of 27 funders, of which four are source funders, or funders that control large amounts of resources and do not generally need to fundraise from other entities. The other funders have to mobilize resources for their grantmaking programs. In 2021, the Global Resilience Fund reported having collectively given out over \$1 million to 234 groups in 91 countries.⁹ An example of a longer term collaboration is the Child Rights Innovation Fund, which centers justice and describes themselves as: "... a dynamic funder learning community, we promote learning, innovation, and collaboration to address the deepest root causes of children's vulnerability—and drive new investments in the power of youth activists, movements, and their allies."¹⁰ The Girls First Fund is another new entry to the field, "designed to support and advance girl-centered and gender-transformative work taking place at the community level."¹¹

Another positive sign was the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) in Paris in June 2021, which generated \$40 billion in pledges

8 See <https://www.theglobalresiliencefund.org/> Accessed on August 31, 2021.

9 The Global Resilience Fund (2021) *Weathering the Storm: Resourcing Girls and Young Activists Through a Pandemic*, <https://www.theglobalresiliencefund.org/report> Accessed on December 13, 2021.

10 See <https://www.crifund.org/> Accessed on August 31, 2021.

11 See <https://girlsfirstfund.org/> Accessed on August 31, 2021.

towards gender equality.^{12,13} The Forum — convened by UN Women and hosted by the governments of France and Mexico — was the largest feminist gathering since 1995. Girls and young people collectively organized and pushed for increased decision-making space in the Forum, resulting in a seat on the highest decision-making body, the Core Group. While holding a seat was an important step toward representation, young people at the Forum still noted a lack of decision-making power.

The \$40 billion in pledges was impressive, but most commitment makers have not specified how much of this funding will go to girl-led organizations, groups, or initiatives. “Only 46 out of all 396 financial commitments mention youth and/or adolescents, mostly in the combination ‘women and girls’.”¹⁴ Pledges at large global forums have a long track record of not being fully met and while there are two accountability frameworks in development, the lack of transparency and access to funding data limits the

extent to which funders can be held accountable in general, and in particular whether they are moving funding directly to girls and young feminists.¹⁵ Furthermore, due to the unclear process for making and tracking commitments, there is a duplication of commitments across the various Action Coalitions as well as double counting given both source and intermediary funders made funding pledges.¹⁶ In addition, some of the resources are not ‘new money’ but rather constitute an ‘attribution exercise’ where funders count resources already committed in their current budget cycles as new pledges in an attempt to get public recognition without spending additional funds.

One aspect we can be certain of is that girls and young feminists will continue to advocate to be a central part of accountability mechanisms for the five-year duration of the funding pledges made at the Forum. Having collectively drafted the *Young Feminist Manifesto*, and through a number of avenues such

12 Chiu, B., (2021), ‘Over \$40 Billion Pledged To Advance Gender Equality During The Generation Equality Forum’, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniechiu/2021/07/03/over-40-billion-pledged-to-advance-gender-equality-during-the-generation-equality-forum/?sh=43f5078f327e>.

13 Use of “\$” represents the US Dollar throughout the report, unless otherwise indicated.

14 Booth, G. Kellner, X. (forthcoming), ‘Generation Equality: The time to redistribute power and resources to girls and young feminists is now’, *Purposeful*.

15 A formal accountability process is coordinated by UN Women and a second co-designed feminist accountability process is coordinated by Global Fund for Women and led by 22 grassroots feminist organizations in the Global South.

16 Booth, G. Kellner, X. (forthcoming), ‘Generation Equality: The time to redistribute power and resources to girls and young feminists is now’, *Purposeful*.

as the Youth Task Force, Action Coalition Youth Leaders, and regional collectives like Nalafem and Young Feminist Europe, they have played a critical role in the GEF process, demanding meaningful youth participation in GEF, including in the accountability process, which could help ensure that girls' needs directly inform how funds are spent and lead to greater continuity and strategic coherence across

a diverse group of funders.¹⁷ We hope that the taxonomy developed for this research — as well as the ideal funding ecosystem presented in chapter 6 — can be useful reference points for the advocacy initiatives of young feminists as they influence the accountability, implementation, and tracking mechanisms to ensure the Forum's pledges have transformational impact.



17 See <https://gefyoungmanifesto.wixsite.com/website>, Accessed June 9, 2023.



CHAPTER 2

Tracking the money

The most important, surprising — and frustrating — research finding was that the existing funding data infrastructure limited us from fully answering the overarching question at the heart of our inquiry: *where is the money for adolescent girls?* While we surfaced and consolidated some new data, shared in chapters 3 and 4, which illustrates the issues to which funds flow as well as the actors driving the funding, four interconnected limitations in how data is acquired, organized, managed and shared (or not shared) made a more meaningful answer impossible to reach. While frustrating, surfacing these limitations is important on its own, as understanding them more clearly can help inform a more effective funding ecosystem. Indeed, the limitations shared in this chapter directly helped shape the scaffolding we offer in chapter 6 as a more fair, just and effective funding ecosystem.

Before we unpack the four limitations, some background on the evolution of funding and data might be helpful. Historically, very limited funding has been directed toward adolescents. Since

Key Messages

- The historical lack of disaggregated data in the women’s rights and children’s rights fields has effectively made adolescent girls invisible in both — a dynamic that has only just begun to improve
- Looking at 71 institutions within the adolescent girls funding landscape, and six data collecting and processing entities, we discovered four interconnected limitations that prevented us from answering the main research question:
 - ▶ Lack of transparent reporting by funders across the ecosystem
 - ▶ Adolescent girls are not counted as a unique population in most funding data
 - ▶ Every funder develops their own taxonomy, or classification framework, which they do not share across the landscape, resulting in a jumble of categories, classifications and terms
 - ▶ Methods used to develop datasets have broad implications for who can access both the data itself and the resources required to understand and act on it
- Understanding these limitations is important as they reveal opportunities for collaboration across funding networks and can help inform a more effective funding ecosystem

the turn of the 21st century, funding to adolescents in general has increased somewhat. But as noted previously, it is

unclear whether this funding is actually reaching and responding to adolescent girls' needs because the funding landscape is so poorly understood.

In many ways, the challenge girls funding advocates face today is strikingly similar to the gap faced by women's rights in 1995. Advocates at the Beijing 4th World Conference for Women asked the question *where is the money for women's rights* and found essentially the same frustrating answers as we are today about funding for adolescent girls. How they responded offers a useful model for how the nascent adolescent girl organizing and funding community might build a strategy. After the Beijing conference, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and Just Associates (JASS) spearheaded an effort to address this question. Joined by others, they built over time a coherent, concerted action research and advocacy effort to understand the politics, practices, needs and gaps in the women's rights funding landscape — and to mobilize new resources for feminist movements. As a result, a clearer picture exists of the actors, amounts and modalities of funding for women's rights, accompanied by sophisticated and context-specific advocacy processes to ensure women and gender non-conforming people benefit from more and better transformational resources.

In an ideal world, girls would have been part of this progress, with a distinct focus built in as the women's rights funding field was

evolving and growing. Historically, however, the women's rights field did not make an age distinction, lumping girls in with women. Meanwhile, the children's rights field at that time did not make gender distinctions, effectively making adolescent girls invisible in both fields — a dynamic that has only just begun to improve.

Methods and sources

In our research over the past year, we looked at 71 institutions within the adolescent girls funding landscape, using a snowball sampling technique, reviewing the existing data and analyzing their actions and strategies associated with flowing funding for girls (see annexes 2 and 3). In addition to those institutions, we looked at data collecting and processing entities, including:

- Candid
- Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN)
- Global Philanthropy Project (GPP)
- Gender Funders CoLab (formerly Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights, or PAWHR)
- 360Giving
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The existing data tells a limited story of funding amounts and distributions for adolescent girls. The data collection entities reviewed have sophisticated data infrastructure. They use a range

of methods to ensure updated, robust funding data from multiple funding sectors, including scraping and coding data from publicly available sources, fielding surveys and conducting in-depth interviews. These entities have been perfecting their technology and craft to enable the inclusion of increasingly diverse data. Indeed, they are creating and improving comprehensive taxonomies, representing data in visually appealing ways, and expanding and deepening the data available in service to various populations, issues and strategies.

Four limitations to tracking the money

Despite all this good news, a deeper dive into the data, the infrastructure that houses it and the policies that govern its uses revealed four significant limitations. Collectively, these limitations made it impossible to determine and document the most fundamental questions about funding flows to adolescent girls.

1. Lack of transparency

The first limitation is the lack of transparent reporting by funders across the landscape. Four aspects of this lack of transparency are instructive:

No global standard or incentives:

Different countries have different regulations, with varying accountability structures. Funders outside of the US

have little incentive to share their data with the public or data-collecting entities. The exception is when funders prioritize transparency as a core institutional value, which is the case for the 155 institutions that report through the 360Giving initiative in the United Kingdom.

US centric data: The US tax code requires private foundations to make their grant funding information publicly available, however outside the US this is not the case. As such, the identified funding data is skewed to the US, offering a limited view of the global adolescent girl funding picture. Location bias may also affect the identification and access to funding data, as the research co-leads are located in the US.

Reporting lacks detail: When adolescent girls funding was identified in the data, there was typically minimal information found regarding who was funded and for what purposes. For example, the full value of each grant tracked within the HRFN dataset that is coded for girls is counted as funding for girls, regardless of whether the funding flows only to girls or is shared with other populations. This lack of detail limits the possibility of funding analysis and comparisons.

Public money is hard to track: Public money from bilateral and multilateral funders is reported to the public, but identifying funding for adolescent girls' is challenging. This is due to the complex funding modalities and channels through which public money flows, such as through pooled funding mechanisms, general

budget support to governments, or where sector budget and program support are often without specificity in terms of amounts and distributions by population and issue. The lack of coherent and consistent data tracking by age and gender makes this dynamic even more vexing.

2. Adolescent girls are not uniquely counted

A second limitation is that adolescent girls are not counted as a unique population in most funding data. For example, Candid and HRFN's annual analysis includes funding for women and girls, but does not disaggregate by age (i.e. girls vs. women). It also includes funding for children, but does not disaggregate by gender (i.e. girls vs. boys). HRFN's dataset offers data on adolescents or girls, rather than adolescents and girls (i.e. girls who are adolescents). The data does not disaggregate by age, so girls of all ages are included.

In 2008, the *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda* report called for funders to “Count girls. Disaggregate data of all types — from health and education statistics to the counts of program beneficiaries — by age and sex.”¹⁸ This call to action is being partially met, notably in the secondary analysis of demographic data and within research data sets. But the progress

has not yet extended to funding data. Instead, funders tend to do the following across the spectrum, creating significant tracking and analysis issues.

Girls are clustered with women, young women, and boys: Funding data for adolescent girls is rarely tracked by funders or the data collection entities as a stand-alone population of interest within the categories of women, children, youth and adolescents. This means that funding for adolescent girls among these categories cannot be discerned — let alone within other population categories with unique needs, such as LGBTQI, migrants and refugees, Indigenous peoples, or people with disabilities. Notably, some funders may allow for the coding of intersectional identities among adolescent girls, but the data collecting entities' technology may not allow for cross-coding or searching.

Age ranges vary widely in disaggregated data: Where gender disaggregation does exist in the funding data, the age ranges vary dramatically, making it difficult to aggregate data across funders and get an accurate global landscape. The age range variance makes it impossible to isolate girls in adolescence from girls in their childhood or girls in young adulthood.

18 Ruth Levine, et al., (2008), 'Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda', Center for Global Development, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/girls-count-global-investment-action-agenda>.

For example, the research team found age ranges varying from:

- 0 to 18
- 10 to 18
- 12 to 18
- 0 to 24 years

These age ranges were classified under a variety of population names and categories, from *girls* to *children* or *youth*.

3. Taxonomies are not shared across the landscape

The third limitation concerns the taxonomies that sit at the core of data infrastructure, describing and classifying how a funder sees the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, every funder develops their own taxonomy, or classification framework — and most do not share them with other funders, the public or data collection entities. The result is a jumble of categories, classifications, terms — and nuanced understandings of those terms — that make achieving any kind of accurate global roll-up of data hugely challenging.

Ideally, taxonomies can help reveal how much money is being allocated for adolescent girls' benefit, and if that funding is responsive to their needs as they express them. Each data collection entity we reviewed had a comprehensive,

complex taxonomy that reflected not only quantitative data needs, but also the issues, strategies and populations prioritized and uplifted in these taxonomies. However, two gaps beyond the lack of sharing, limit the utility of these taxonomies for analyzing adolescent girls' funding flows.

Missing and generic: Many taxonomies simply did not include adolescent girls. When relevant terms were present in taxonomies, their definitions were too general, lacked nuance or clear political understanding, resulting in their inconsistent application and making it difficult to analyze and use funding data in meaningful ways. This is particularly problematic when occurring within funding collaborations or institutions. These factors all contribute to the limited ability to identify amounts and distributions of funding toward adolescent girls.

The risk of siloing: Capturing intersectional funding (see Definition Box 4) and organizing it in taxonomies is still limited, though interest is clearly growing among some funders.¹⁹ The broader social justice and human rights fields, however, are still learning how to capture the flow of funds to particular populations and issues. The key challenge is to find a representative way of capturing funds that does not under or over assign resources to one aspect within intersectional identities or issues.

19 Journey Towards Intersectional Grantmaking (2018), Funders for a Just Economy, <https://www.nfg.org/resources/journey-towards-intersectional-grant-making>, accessed March 1, 2022.



Definition Box 4: Intersectional funding

“Grant-making that takes into consideration the ways in which multiple systems of oppression are interwoven in people’s lives, communities, cultures, and institutions and how they impact people differently based on where each person sits and their lived experience.”

— *Journey Towards Intersectional Grant-Making Report*

A valuable and perhaps obvious step forward would be to develop a common and shared taxonomy for the adolescent girls funding field that not only supports an understanding of amounts and distributions of money, but also captures the framing as well as practices of the funders. This idea is discussed in chapter 6 where we share the scaffolding for a more effective funding ecosystem.

4. Funding datasets are not accessible

The fourth and final limitation to tracking funding for adolescent girls is perhaps the hardest to address because it is not a technical or policy fix — it is about access and resources. We found that **the methods used to develop datasets have broad implications for who can access both the data itself and the resources required to understand and act on it.**

Data collection entities approach building their datasets in a number of ways, depending on their purposes, including:

Aggregating public data and making it accessible for public use:

Private foundations in some countries and public institutions across the world are held accountable by governments and taxpayers to report their funding to the public. While this data is made publicly available, it is not easily accessed, aggregated, or particularly descriptive when institutions report it. As such, organizations such as OECD and Candid gather, code and clean this data, and make it more accessible for public use. All types of entities can access the data, but using it requires additional inputs. For example, HRFN and GPP start with Candid’s dataset, and then enrich that data using a number of different methodologies to produce reporting and build their database. Understanding funding for adolescent girls from public data can be extremely resource intensive in addition to the limitations already discussed above.

Fielding surveys within closed

communities: Funder networks such as Gender Funders CoLab and Prospera, and member organizations, field surveys to collect funding data from individual institutions as a way to understand what is happening within their shared funding field. Often, surveys are administered, coded and cleaned, and grant data is made

available in a searchable database to which only the closed community have access.²⁰ Some networks produce funding analysis reports, which are accessible to the general public but do not provide detailed funding data. Sometimes surveys are fielded in a way that facilitates direct inputs into a grants database, and that data may or may not be cleaned. Taxonomies may or may not shape the surveys that are fielded. Fielding surveys are resource intensive for funders to complete and for networks of staff to manage.

Fielding surveys to non-funder field actors: Field-building and other civil society organizations, such as CIVICUS, field surveys to public and private funding recipients to gather data about the sources and purpose of their funding.²¹ While survey data is held in a dataset, it is not used to develop a searchable funding database. Rather, findings are analyzed and presented collectively

in reports. Much like those above, this approach is also resource intensive meaning samples are unlikely to be fully representative of all organizations doing the work on a particular issue or with a particular population.

Collectively, these four limitations made it impossible to fully answer the question: where is the money for adolescent girls? However, understanding the limitations to the current funding data infrastructure revealed opportunities for collaboration across funding networks, from shared taxonomies to greater transparency from bi- and multilateral funders. Building a more effective funding ecosystem for adolescent girls will be a multi-year process, as described in chapter 6. In the meantime, it is useful to consider what we learned in landscaping the issues and actors in the girls funding landscape — which is the focus of the next chapter. ■

20 We were not able to review Prospera's funding data due to the data confidentiality agreement between Prospera and members. Networks keep data confidential for a number of reasons, including protecting grantee recipient identities.

21 State of Civil Society Report (2021), <https://civicus.org/state-of-civil-society-report-2021/> Accessed March 8, 2022.

Section 2

Landscaping funding for adolescent girls





Definition Box 5: Transformational funding frameworks

Frameworks that acknowledge the systemic oppressions that perpetuate inequality, considering the social, political, economic or other systems and contexts into which funding flows. Instead of viewing girls only as beneficiaries of particular services or programs, transformational funding frameworks recognize girls' agency and voice, flowing resources directly to girls and/or their allies to challenge and transform power relations and structures.

Chapter 2 illustrated how the lack of clear, consistent and trackable data made it extremely difficult to answer even the most fundamental questions about the adolescent girls funding landscape. Chapters 3 and 4 form the heart of our research, sensemaking the **key actors** in the adolescent girls funding landscape and the **funding streams** that are formed by the priorities they choose. To begin to answer the questions of “*who is doing the spending, and how much?*”, and “*who is the funding going to and for what?*”, we developed a taxonomy to create a framework and common language for the analysis (see annex 3). While the taxonomy in no way solved the overarching problem of insufficient and inconsistent data it did provide a framework for the available data and information, as well as a point of departure for the scaffolding of a girls funding ecosystem described in chapter 6.²²

Given the depth of our findings and the different entry points of our analysis, we divided the landscaping analysis into two chapters. Building on seminal research into women's rights funding trends, we begin with **the actors**. Understanding the source of funding and how it flows from different types of funders helps explain



22 The data infrastructure (taxonomy, software) for this research process was intentionally designed to support deepening understanding of the landscape over time, e.g. adding new actors, new data, and refining the taxonomy.



Definition Box 6: Feminist adolescent girls funder

Criteria developed for this research includes:

- Commitment to feminist principles, practices, and aspirations
- Commitment to funding adolescent girls (including girl-led, young feminist led, or adult-led work) is explicit and financially backed
- Specific funding for adolescent girls is currently tracked, or soon to be tracked
- Adolescent girls' agency and voice are considerations in funding and they are not only passive beneficiaries of programs
- A range of participatory models are employed to engage girls at different levels of program design and/or decision-making and/or evaluation

the constraints and characteristics of the broader landscape — especially the politics and power dynamics that often leave adolescent girls out of the funding picture. We then move to the **funding streams**, because individual actors' funding can enter the larger funding landscape from multiple entry points, and dynamics can change depending on the issue, population or sectoral stream through which funding flows toward girls.

A central thesis of our landscaping work is that far too much of the funding that reaches adolescent girls looks at girls as *beneficiaries* and recipients of their support, not as *political actors* who can make decisions and determine resourcing priorities (see Definition Box 5). We unpack this dynamic in chapter 4, and show how it is revealed by what funders prioritize in their funding decisions. We also acknowledge and celebrate the vast funding that has flowed toward priorities such as girls' education, health, and economic empowerment.

The complexities and multiplicities of the funding landscape are evident in the presence of different actors and funding streams. Although it is encouraging to uncover multiple actors and entry points into funding adolescent girls, the landscape demonstrates power imbalances. Examples of what can be seen in the landscape include: the amounts of funding flowing into some approaches for girls and not to others; certain issues and institutions receiving attention over others; dependencies

rather than interdependencies among actors, and a disconnect in who and how funding priorities are determined. All of this works against the long-term potential for funding to fully meet girls' needs.

Our analysis of the current landscape uncovered distinct lessons and learnings that directly led to our recommendations for a more fair, just and effective funding ecosystem for girls, which is found in chapter 6. While our landscaping work certainly found gaps and flaws in the current landscape, it also found hopeful signs of what is working. Some actors

are working with girls in innovative and participatory ways and feminist-influenced funding streams are delivering more transformational resources to girls. There are also developments in funder commitments to put significant resources towards girls. Our landscaping findings in this section thus offer an opening for conversations around how

these lessons can inform feminist funders on how to engage with other funding sectors and flow more resources to girls; and invite all funders to explore transformational feminist approaches to resourcing girls through offering a deeper dive into the position and practices of feminist adolescent girls' funders (see Definition Box 6).





CHAPTER 3

Understanding how actors are shaping the landscape

To understand the current funding landscape for adolescent girls, it is helpful to first categorize and analyze the diverse actors — from governments and foundations to UN agencies and INGOs — who in varying ways flow resources toward adolescent girls.

In keeping with “Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?” methodologies, we found it helpful to group funders based on the amounts of resources and how they acquired them, as well as whether they are working alone or with other funders, as it helps understand their specific behaviors, responsibilities and the power dynamics that shape their funding decisions.²³ It is important to note that not all of these entities think of themselves — or are generally viewed — as funders. Indeed, many of these actors play multiple roles

Key Messages 1/2

The funder landscape for adolescent girls is complex, with a multiplicity of actors entering with differing politics and approaches. Our research categorized the actors into three groupings:

- **Source funders** with large amounts of resources, like bilaterals and private foundations
- **Intermediary funders** that need to fundraise, such as multilaterals like the United Nations agencies; INGOs; children’s and women’s funds
- **Funder collaborations**, which often bring together source funders with a diversity of intermediary funders and other actors

 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

in the landscape and need to fundraise themselves to deliver their programs, campaigns or movement building work. That said, from an adolescent girl’s perspective, they are resourced entities with the financial power to invest (or not) in her well-being and future; and to listen to (or ignore) her expressed needs. In this way, we use the term ‘funder’ in a broad sense to indicate an **entity that has resources to invest and some discretionary power over where and how**

23 See [Where is the Money for Women’s Rights Toolkit](#), accessed February 24, 2022.

to provide resources. Therefore, we place funders under three different groupings:

Source funders: Funders that control large amounts of resources and do not generally need to fundraise from other entities, giving them the ability to control narratives, define and prioritize funding streams, and act with little accountability to the people for whom funding is intended. Source funders dramatically shape the adolescent girls' funding landscape as they enter and exit different funding streams based on political shifts or their changing financial fortunes.

Source funders include:

- Bilateral funders
- Private foundations
- Private sector companies
- High-net worth individuals

Intermediary funders: Entities

— sometimes large, sometimes small — that need to secure funding from others to deliver their mission.²⁴

24 We acknowledge that the actors included in this category differ from past definitions of intermediary funders, which often did not include multilaterals and INGOs and focused on re-granters. Our point is that all of these entities need to secure funding on an annual basis to deliver their mission, and thus are influenced in some way by the politics and perspectives of their source funders. While we did not look at private development consulting firms for this research, we recognize they also need to secure funding on an annual basis to deliver their mission.

Key Messages 2/2

Frameworks, issues, strategies, practices, and decision-making models shape the funding flows within the landscape. The research found:

- Funding flows through the vast majority of the landscape via restricted or project-based funding, with only some funding flowing in transformational ways
- The majority of the transformational funding that reaches girls flows from intermediary funders. What unites this category of funders is their unique potential to influence source funders and, like alchemists, transform vague or misguided funding strategies into programs that are transformational for girls
- Because funders regularly communicate their frameworks, but to a much lesser extent their funding practices, we found it difficult to determine the full extent to which frameworks are matched by practices. Funders, however, who embrace transformational practices are more likely to promote them
- The issues that funders tend to flow money to the most are: health, safety/violence prevention, and economic empowerment, with the most funded strategies appearing to be advocacy, organizing and evidence generation
- Funder collaboratives are important because they can bring the whole diversity of landscape actors closer together. They can offer a learning environment that enables funders to experiment and thus present an opportunity to explore cultivating a more feminist funding ecosystem for adolescent girls

These actors often secure their funding from source actors. How they deliver that funding varies widely — some are re-granters, some are implementers and some are large, complex entities that do both. For our purposes, what unites them is their unique potential to influence source funders and, like alchemists, transform vague or misguided funding strategies into programs that deliver real impact for girls. Indeed, the majority of the transformational funding that reaches girls flows from these intermediaries. Our research strongly supports the role of some of these funders as an essential part of a healthy ecosystem, while recognizing the unhealthy power held by others. Intermediary actors include:

- Multilaterals
- INGOs
- Public foundations
- Girls' funds
- Women's funds
- Children's funds

Funder collaborations: Groups of actors that come together to deliver joint initiatives and leverage the power of collective action — whether through programming, advocacy or co-investment. Some are formal partnerships with clear governance and focused strategies; others are looser, more informal collaborations of like-minded partners. They sometimes act similarly to intermediary funders — influencing resource flows from source funders to adolescent girls and the

programs that support them. But it is important to note that some collaborative models are composed of (or at least include some) source funders. Funder collaborations are also unique in that they require clear intention every step of the way so as to mitigate potentially harmful power multiplied through collaboration. What unites this group is that they act in concert with others, and this in turn helps influence their investment and policy choices, with direct impact on adolescent girls.

- Advocacy collaboratives and collectives
- Campaigns
- Funder groups and networks
- Global partnerships and coalitions
- Every effort at categorization has its pros and cons, and we acknowledge that the model we present above is only one potential way to present and share a large and diverse group of actors. Before we dive deep into each of the three categories to unpack the funding trends and priorities of a representative sample of each one, we present broad strokes of what we see in terms of politics and practices across the landscape

Orienting to the politics and practices in the landscape

As part of our larger analysis, we reviewed public data from 71 funders in the adolescent girls funding landscape. Public data can offer a range of insights, helping us see what *is* present and what

is not present in the landscape, though it also has significant limitations.²⁵ To complement public data, we used the following additional methods:

- Consulting the working group members for insights and analysis
- Conducting workshops with feminist adolescent girls' funders
- Analyzing the findings with our core research team, all with complementary expertise in the field

The data for all of these actors was collected using snowball sampling and is not assumed to be all inclusive (see annex 2).²⁶ Still, we believe it represents many of the current actors in the field, especially in the Global North. While this chapter includes some feminist adolescent girls' funders, a deeper analysis of these funders can be found in chapter 5. What follows here is a view across the landscape of the frameworks, issues, strategies, practices, and decision-making models that shape it, as identified by our taxonomy (see annex 3).

This research gives prominence to framing because it communicates a funder's politics and purposes, which in turn shape its funding priorities and practices. The frames that funders choose impact everything from how decisions are being made (and by whom) to the practical, technical details of program design and implementation. Reviewing frames and comparing them with practices is a helpful analysis toward identifying gaps and disconnects between what funders say they want to do and aspire to achieve and what they are actually doing. Understanding these dynamics would help address a central inquiry of our research: **how do the politics and practices of funders impact the lives of adolescent girls?**

Funders frameworks — or the broader worldviews that funders use to guide their decisions — are widely communicated across the landscape by all types of funders, just as the issues and strategies that funders prefer to fund are also frequently mentioned (see figure 1). Yet, references to funding and decision-making

25 Note on public data use and limitations: Public data helps us understand how funders see themselves, as well as how they position themselves within the broader funding landscape. While some of what is communicated may be purely aspirational, public data still offers insights into how funders frame their decisions, what issues and strategies they are most likely to support, and even what positions, perspectives, and arguments they may find most persuasive. There is also a lot to learn from what funders do not say: failure to mention transformative practices, such as participatory funding processes with adolescent girls, strongly suggests funders are using more traditional decision-making models. Crucial to understand is that public data cannot be used to determine actual funding practices, how much money is flowing to adolescent girls, where that money is flowing, or why it is being moved in precisely those ways. The amount of public data that is available also varies by funder—as some funders direct considerable resources toward communication, whereas others do not.

26 Sampling and analysis of actors was completed during the period of July-December 2020.

practices are rare, making it difficult to understand and track funding flows — echoing girls’ experience of the landscape (see chapter 1). While some actors in our sample stand out for their transparency in communicating funding and decision-making practices — particularly women’s funds and girls’ funds — the opacity among private sector, multilaterals, and a split of INGOs and children’s funds,

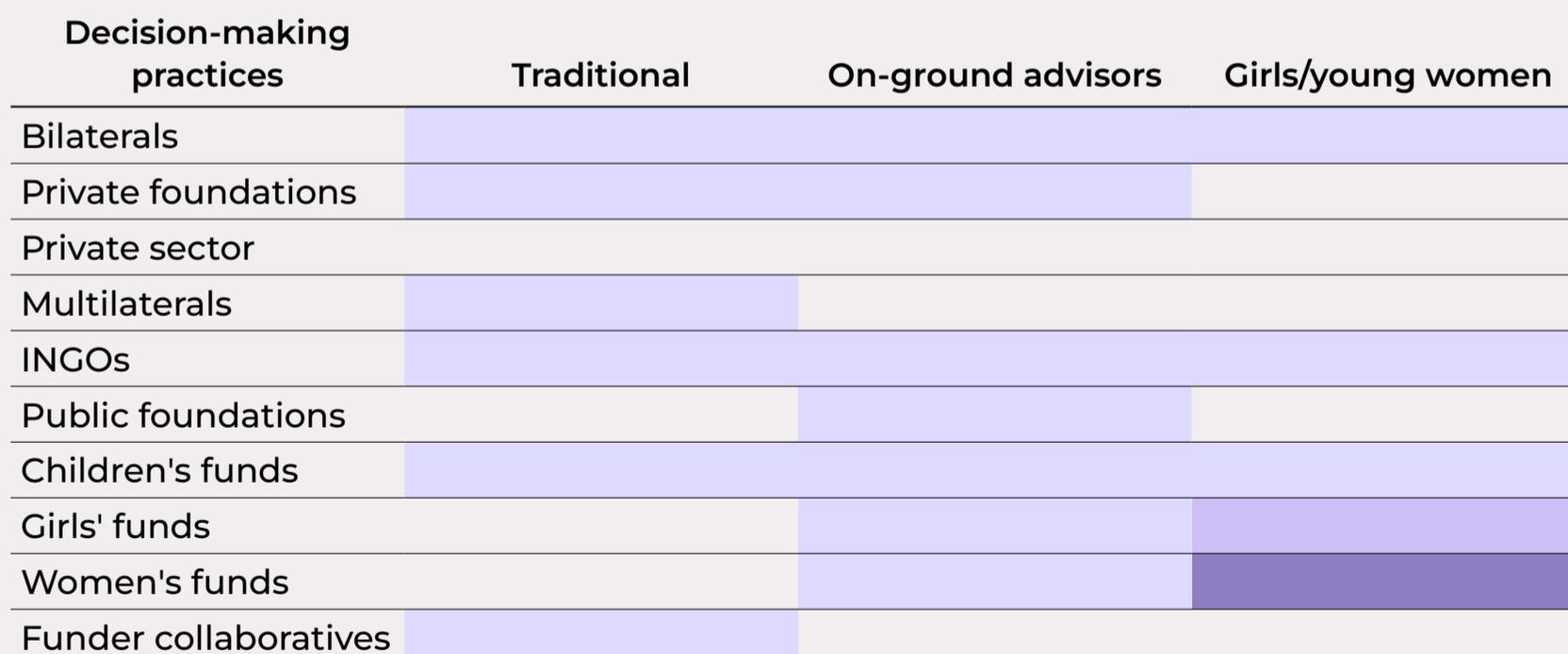
suggests decisions are being made by executives, boards, trustees, or program leadership (see figure 2). This is limiting the ability to understand gaps between what funders aspire to contribute to the world versus explicit commitments to practically pursue those contributions. This is consistent with findings coming out of our workshops and echoes the feminist movement’s assessment.

Figure 1. Frequency with which actors discuss politics, priorities and practices in public data



This figure shows the extent to which various aspects of funding are referenced in public data, such that darker shading indicates aspects that are discussed frequently, whereas lighter shading indicates information that is less available in the public domain.

Figure 2. Decision-making practices, by actor category

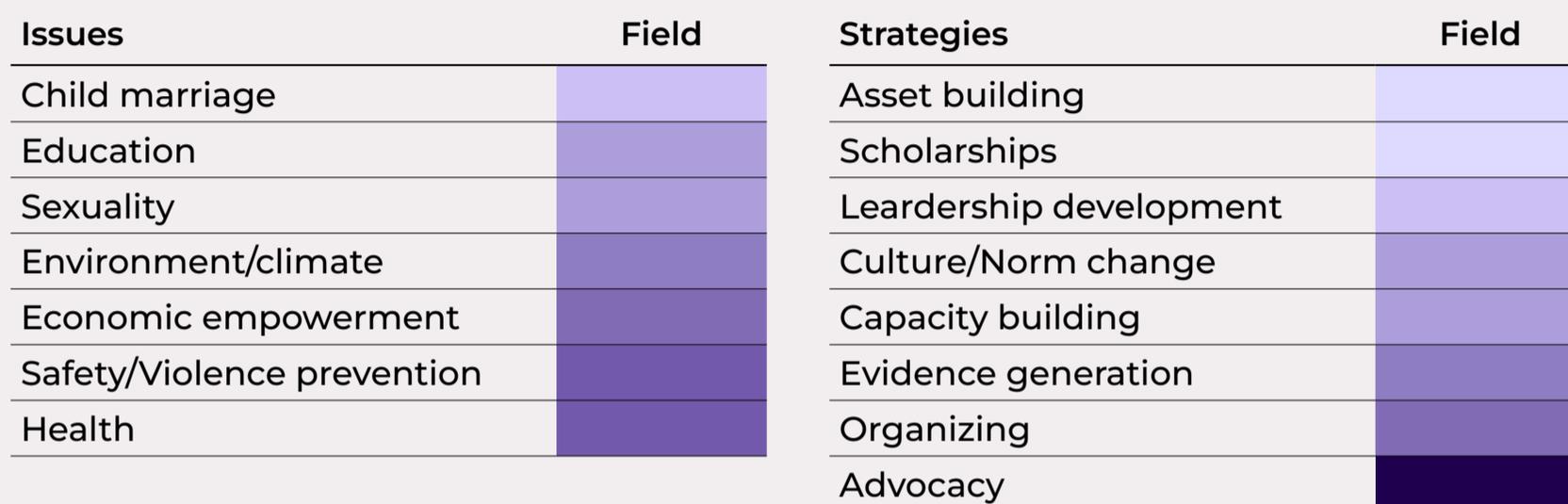


This figure shows the extent to which various decision-making practices are referenced in public data, such that darker shading indicates practices that are referenced frequently, whereas lighter shading indicates practices that are less promoted in the public domain.

We were not able to discern from public data what role girls are playing in prioritizing strategies for funding, and how funding is flowing against the issues funders prioritize, nor were we able to analyze by funder category.

As far as understanding common strategies, we were able to observe that the strategy of advocacy is favored over that of, say, asset building — just as health (as a catch all) is likely to attract more funding from across many different funder categories than, say, child marriage (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Issues and strategies, all actors



These figures show the extent to which various issue areas and strategies are referenced in public data, such that darker shading indicates issue areas that are referenced frequently, whereas lighter shading indicates issue areas that are less promoted in the public domain.

On issues in particular, but also across all other areas, our analysis is complemented by other methods (see annex 4). What follows next is a closer look at each of the funder categories we identified at the start of this chapter. We also offer a few illustrative examples of funders in our sample, not as deep case studies or exemplars, but rather as an illustration of a landscape that is not easy to understand.

Looking closer at three funder categories

1. Source funders

This section looks at the three sub-categories of source funders: bilaterals, private foundations and private sector funders.²⁷ It also includes a spotlight on an influential source funder.

²⁷ Definitions for terms used in this chapter, such as evidence-based approaches, can be found in the Taxonomy in annex 2.

BILATERALS

Source funders reviewed in the bilateral sub-category were nine in number. Based on Official Development Assistance (ODA) distributions, bilateral funding continues to be the largest source of funding for gender equality and child protection and rights; two sectors through which funding reaches adolescent girls. Bilateral funding also plays the dominant role in shaping the narratives and frameworks within the adolescent girl funding landscape, given their significant resource flows through a wide spectrum of funding streams (see chapter 5).

As with some other types of funders, it was hard to discern how bilaterals determined who and what to fund, as well as the process behind those decisions. Historically, complex funding processes, procedures and requirements have made bilateral funding difficult to access for many implementers.

Bilateral funders tend to be more cautious in public-facing language, with Sweden, The Netherlands, Norway, and Canada as current exceptions. Framings inevitably are tied to the political party in power, so elections often bring changes every few years. With growing conservatism globally, fewer governments are willing to fund transformational, rights-based work.

The data collected strongly suggests that even the most progressive funders — and the most dedicated to adolescent girl programs — do not employ the same type and degree of transformational framing language that is consistently being used by women’s funds and girls’ funder collectives.

Funding through a feminist frame remains rare among bilaterals. That said, a small handful of bilateral funders are moving towards embracing feminist foreign policies, which intentionally consider the role of women’s organizations and movements as one way to address and overcome systemic gender power imbalances. In June 2021, the Global Partner Network to Advance Feminist Foreign Policy was formed as part of the Generation Equality Forum in Paris, where Sweden, Canada, France, Mexico, Luxembourg and Spain adopted a shared framework for a feminist foreign policy.²⁸

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

Source funders reviewed in the private foundations sub-category were 13 in number. While these funders are known for their particular contributions toward funding adolescent girls, none explicitly referenced work with adolescent girls in

28 International Center for Research on Women (2021), ‘More than 30 governments and organizations now working to advance feminist foreign policy around the world’, <https://www.icrw.org/press-releases/more-than-30-governments-and-organizations-now-working-to-advance-feminist-foreign-policy-around-the-world/> Accessed February 15, 2022.

publicly available data at the time of our landscape review.²⁹

These funders tend to support *community-based groups; formal adult-led organizations centering girls; young feminist-led; and registered girl-led organizing*. They also fund a diverse set of actors from INGOs to research institutions to women’s funds, as well as contributing to multilateral agencies and partnering with governments.

While private foundations are often known for their top down decision-making, with board members and trustees often playing key roles in strategic directions and grantmaking decisions, our research found that foundations were often consulting with on-the-ground advisors for program-level decision-making. Some private foundations are also starting to fund grantmakers like FRIDA, Mama Cash and the With and For Girls Fund at Purposeful — all of whom use participatory decision-making models. This is one indicator of private foundations adopting a more feminist approach to funding adolescent girls. In this way, funders are recognizing girls’ agency at the same time as their own limitations in understanding girls’ realities, and they are overcoming practical hurdles to engage in the kinds of funding relationships adolescent girls describe as supportive.

Increasingly, private foundations are using political language to describe their work, with progressive frames like *justice* and *empowerment* appearing often. Decision-making relies heavily on *evidence-based approaches* to shape investment priorities. These seemingly contradictory findings suggest that while progressive private foundations may be increasingly moving toward justice and transformational frameworks, related practices may not be adopted, particularly with regard to who is holding decision-making power and how decisions are made.

Private foundations’ behaviors cannot (and should not) be generalized or simplified — their politics and practices vary widely by institution. Each institution is, of course, made up of individuals whose beliefs, influencing skills, and relationships also vary across an organization. At the same time, private foundations engage with the adolescent girl funding landscape through a number of different funding streams, making institution-wide analysis using publicly available data highly challenging (as is true for any large institutional funder).

Overall, private foundations do not function as a coherent and comprehensive sector — for multiple reasons. First, they enter the landscape from different issues or populations of interest (e.g. children, women, youth). In addition, they often

29 The landscape review was conducted over the period from October to November 2020.

set priorities from the top down, while accountability mechanisms are to trustees and boards rather than to the populations they intend to serve.

Private foundations also work collaboratively with other types of funders — including other foundations, bilateral and multilateral funders. Depending on their size and priorities, some foundations are deeply influential in multilateral spaces, with increasing — but not sufficient — coordination among themselves and other funders as collaborators who come together as partners to shape responses to particular issues. Foundations also serve as funders for other types of actors addressed in this research, such as women’s funds and INGOs. In these cases, the dynamics are different, tending less toward partnership and more toward a grantor-grantee relationship.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Source funders in the private sector sub-category were three in number, of which two explicitly referenced work with adolescent girls. Understanding how private sector funders make decisions, who is funded, and how resources are distributed is especially difficult for private sector funders.

An emerging group of actors with potential to influence the adolescent girls landscape is individual philanthropists. They are grouped with the private sector



SOURCE FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: NOVO FOUNDATION

NoVo Foundation’s entry and presence in the field supported vast amounts of feminist transformative work in unprecedented ways with and for adolescent girls. When the NoVo Foundation announced in 2020 that it was ending the Ending Violence Against Girls and Women portfolio and transitioning the Advancing Adolescent Girls’ Rights portfolio, it left an enormous financial gap in the feminist funding field. At its peak, NoVo Foundation was providing millions of dollars annually for adolescent girl programs globally. The impacts of this gap on the funding landscape are significant not only financially, but also in its feminist politics and practices.

To date, no other single funder has taken up the mantle. NoVo Foundation’s exit has deeply impacted the feminist adolescent girls’ funders and their work. It is important for the field to reflect on lessons learned from the roles that NoVo Foundation played in the funding landscape, as well as their funding politics and practices, and integrate those lessons moving forward.

because of the significant wealth they command. The reason to note individual philanthropists in the current landscape is due to some recent interest in feminist transformative work towards gender equality and justice, as well as the recent unprecedented funding amounts

donated by MacKenzie Scott.³⁰ Individual philanthropist politics and practices are, obviously, highly individualized, and can play a role in shaping a future feminist funding ecosystem.

2. Intermediary funders

This section looks at the six sub-categories of intermediary funders: multilaterals, INGOs, women's funds, public foundations, children's funds, and girls' funds. It also includes a spotlight on an influential funder.

MULTILATERALS

Intermediary funders that we reviewed in the multilateral sub-category were four in number.³¹ Multilateral agencies play an important and complicated role in the adolescent girls' funding landscape. Their primary funding sources are bilateral agencies and large private foundations, with the private sector deeply involved at times as funders and at times as influencers for girls funding. Multilaterals have a large arena and convening power, and their funders have privileged access to decision-makers and influence over funding. They are fundamentally different from other actors in that they are intergovernmental agencies and thus

an instrument of member governments. For example, at the country level, UNICEF enters into agreements with governments on how to allocate and spend funds through annual work planning. Another example is that UNFPA's strategic direction is shaped by the main bilateral funders and funders with significant resources.

Private funders have some ability to shape the individual projects they fund within these agencies. Multilaterals, along with governments, also have a particularly influential role in the larger development landscape because of the status and legitimacy of being an intergovernmental actor. Similar to the bilateral funders, the wide spectrum of entry points into the adolescent girls funding landscape by multilaterals positions them across the entire landscape — everywhere except perhaps movement building.

Multilaterals are playing a convening role, creating spaces for dialogue and collaboration between diverse stakeholders, often bringing together governments, UN agencies and civil society. UN agencies are on a learning curve in how they broker power dynamics with girls, government, private sector and civil society. For example, UNGEI is hosting Transform Education, a coalition of

30 See <https://mackenzie-scott.medium.com/116-organizations-driving-change-67354c6d733d> Accessed July 15, 2021.

31 International financial institutions and regional multilateral development banks were not included in this research sample.

youth-led networks that are grounded in inclusive feminist practices and working toward transforming education for gender equality.³² UN Women, in their capacity as the secretariat of the Generation Equality Forum, is responding to calls for a feminist accountability framework for girls.

At the same time, multilaterals — and large INGOs — are distinct from other intermediary funders in that their budgets are significantly larger, their access to source funders is greater, and they tend to resource girls as beneficiaries of support in their funding politics and practices, instead of as political actors. Multilateral funders hold unique power and influence within the adolescent girls funding landscape — and their politics and practices are an indicator of the extent to which funding flowing towards adolescent girls is transformational and recognizes adolescent girls' political agency.

INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (INGOS)

Intermediary funders we reviewed in the INGO sub-category were 13 in number. The INGOs we reviewed — with a few exceptions — have significant budgets that exceed those of other intermediary

32 See <https://www.ungei.org/take-action/advocate/transform-education>. Accessed March 28, 2022.

33 See <https://www.unicef.org/reports/adolescent-girls-programme-strategy-2022-2025> Accessed June 8, 2023.



INTERMEDIARY FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: UNICEF

UNICEF's new Gender Action Plan 2022-25 prioritizes adolescent girls' wellbeing as well as their leadership and agency through a series of targeted commitments across health, education, social protection, WASH/Environment, child protection and nutrition sectors.³³ In 2022, an estimated 4 percent of the organization's total budget went to adolescent girls' priorities. In 2023, UNICEF is working to increase this figure and ensure greater investments in girls' leadership, agency and voice through the launch of a new dedicated adolescent girl agenda.

UNICEF currently hosts roughly 50 dedicated gender specialists across 190 field offices to coordinate adolescent girl programming, in conjunction with sector and adolescent specialists. Various capacity development initiatives have also been launched to support adolescent girl programming in recent years.

Flexible funding and models for flowing funds to girl-led groups and networks are also emerging. Despite these positive policy and capacity advances, however, gaps remain in ensuring a girl-centered focus on programming and advocacy initiatives. Much more is needed to advance innovative pilot initiatives to scale with diverse partners. Such efforts have been especially critical in the COVID-19 response and recovery. UNICEF has also identified an urgent need for investing in efforts to advance operational learning and close knowledge gaps in a number of priority areas including integration or bundling of services across multiple platforms.

funders, except multilaterals. For example, World Vision spans nearly 100 countries, employs 37,000-plus staff and in 2019 raised more than \$2.9 billion.³⁴ Plan International is active in 77 countries and spent €869 million in 2019.³⁵

INGOs are versatile and have relationships with multiple actors across multiple actor types with strong fundraising connections to all sources of funding.

INGOs are viewed more as implementers (and in some cases advocates) than they are as funders. Grantmaking is not the core function for delivering their strategies and does not take a big percentage of their total budgets. The small amounts given out in grants are important, however, as they often reach communities that others do not. Even when their engagement strategy is as an implementing partner and not a formal grantmaker, they are still bringing significant resources into communities and holding decision-making power over specific initiatives in which girls may be included.

INGOs who act as grantmakers get their resources from bilaterals, foundations, and donations from individuals (the general public and high networth wealthy individuals). The funds they

raise from individuals, which are substantial, give them significant ability to act independently and influence the landscape.

When they do act as grantmakers, INGOs most often fund community-based groups and formal adult-led organizations. A few INGOs also funded young feminist-led organizations and unregistered groups, as well as both registered and unregistered girl-led organizing. Some joined funder collectives and collaboratives. As such, INGO funding is entering the landscape in broad and diverse ways, with capacity for flowing funding using a range of practices.

INGOs work across different ways of organizing and engaging with both formal and informal groups. Consequently, INGOs are a funding type that can deliver resources to the most diverse actors. The most common practice, by far among INGOs, was *responsiveness*. *Awareness/mitigation of safety risks; awareness/mitigation of power dynamics; trust in girls' expertise; and anti-racist practices* are also present to lesser degrees. Decision-making and funding amounts and distributions are not transparently shared by many of the institutions within this grouping.

34 World Vision (2019), *Partnership Update 2019*, <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/World%20Vision%20International%20Partnership%20Update%202019.pdf>.

35 Plan International (2019), *Plan International Worldwide Annual Review 2019*, <https://plan-international.org/publications/worldwide-annual-review-2019>.

INGOs use a wide spectrum of frameworks to describe their work, speaking to these actors' diversity. The majority of INGOs reviewed are representative of more traditional, large INGOs, for whom adolescent girls are one of many populations addressed. Plan International stands out among those reviewed because they explicitly name advancing equality for girls as part of their mission in addition to advancing children's rights. Purposeful is also unique among INGOs because it was created and is dedicated solely to adolescent girls and uses a feminist approach to all of their work, including funding adolescent girls (see chapter 5).

PUBLIC FOUNDATIONS

Intermediary funders we reviewed in the public foundations sub-category were six in number.³⁶ The public foundations reviewed support a range of issues, populations and interventions and as such they have multiple funding stream entry points into the adolescent girls funding landscape. Community-based groups are representative of specific segments within a community and are locally founded and led; for example, one public foundation is supporting an organization that provides care and mentorship to young women and girls who were recruited as child soldiers during a civil war.

Public foundations are important funding institutions bringing resources from source funders and often providing the 'alchemy' that translates grants into more flexible and transformational funding for girls.

CHILDREN'S FUNDS

Intermediary funders we reviewed in the children's funds sub-category were three in number. Children's funds, like women's funds and public foundations, need to raise funds to deliver their missions.

Children's funds tend toward transformative practices, with the following specific funding practices: *seed/start-up/planning grants; technical assistance grants; general operating/core/flexible support; multi-year grants; and annual grants*. When reviewing for whom are funded, only *community-based groups* are identified.

The most common framing used by these funds is *human rights*, with *empowerment, protectionist and justice* present in significant concentrations. Children's rights frameworks are guided by the key concept of evolving capacities of the child, and understandings of "how children can be protected, in accordance with their evolving capacities, and also provided with opportunities to participate in the fulfillment of their

36 For the purpose of this research, children's funds and women's funds — which are technically public foundations — are analyzed as separate funder types given their specific characteristics.



rights.”³⁷ Human rights as the most common framing suggests a changing moment in children’s funding may be happening, moving from leading with protectionist frameworks to human rights (see Definition Box 7). Children’s Rights Innovation Fund, for example, was created in 2020 with funding from private foundations, and has a well articulated children’s rights and justice framework.

In terms of funding amounts and where funding is coming from, the children’s funds in our sample rely on private foundations and donations from the general public, with the following budgets in 2019:

Global Fund for Children: funding 152 local organizations in 35 countries, distributing more than \$2.1 million in grants.³⁸

Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF): funding in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania with \$394,800 distributed in grants.³⁹

GIRLS’ FUNDS

Intermediary funders we reviewed in the girls funds sub-category were three in number. **Girls’ funds can be distinguished**

Definition Box 7: Protectionist frameworks

Frameworks that portray girls and children overall as dependent, vulnerable and at risk of abuse and articulates that because children lack the capacity to care for themselves they require the protection of adults to ensure their proper growth and development (girls as beneficiaries).

from other actors in the adolescent girls funding landscape because they bring funders using different frameworks together to distribute pooled funding toward shared outcomes. When they are part of collaborations and collectives, funders often distribute funding using politics and practices different from their own institutions. For funders already supporting adolescent girls and wanting to work in new ways, or for funders newly entering into the adolescent girls funding landscape, collectives offer the opportunity to explore new modalities together with other funders.

Girls’ funder collaborations often deliver funding in more transformative

37 Landsdown, Garison. (2005) The Evolving Capacities of the Child, Innocenti Insight, Save the Children, UNICEF <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/384-the-evolving-capacities-of-the-child.html>.

38 See <https://globalfundforchildren.org/about-us/financials/>.

39 Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (2019), *When Children are Heard: Promising interventions for prevention of violence against children and adolescent girls*, Annual Report 2019, https://ca54b7f3-7d69-45d0-b832-0854a6f081ff.filesusr.com/ugd/9f4592_da19f75db0874e89acd8dce2b7710401.pdf.

ways than if the funders were acting alone. A summary of each collective is presented below. Note that members of the funds were also included in this research as individual organizations. And further note that two of the girls' funds are housed at Purposeful, the feminist INGO discussed above as an example of innovation in the field.

With and For Girls Collective is housed at Purposeful. Members are united by a common belief that “girls are agents of change.” With and For Girls Collective contributes to a participatory grantmaking fund by, and for, adolescent girls that *“recognises extraordinary girl-led and girl-centred groups and organisations around the world through an annual awards process that offers flexible funding alongside opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, accompaniment and profile-raising. Since 2014, the programme has supported 85 organisations in 49 countries reaching more than 1.5 million people, through \$3.7million in flexible awards and an additional \$1 million in leveraged funds.”* The different actors brought together by With and For Girls Collective typically have different political entry points into the landscape, indicating the unique role the Collective plays in facilitating cross-actor collaboration and moving money for adolescent girls in more transformative, feminist directions. For example, money flows from members to the With and For Girls Fund, which is associated with the Collective. The Collective then supports organizations with flexible funding through a girl-led selection process.

Girls First Fund is a funder collaborative *“supported by leading philanthropic organizations and individual philanthropists who have come together to champion community-led efforts so that all girls can live free from child marriage and create their own future. It focuses on funding projects and groups that focus on girls, families, and communities because it believes they are in the best position to create lasting, local change and to address the root causes of child marriage. The Girls First Fund is the first funding partnership of its size focused on ending child marriage with grantmaking directed to community-based and locally-focused national organizations.”* Similar to With and For Girls Collective, the Girls First Fund brings together funders from widely varying positions on the actor map, playing a unique role in moving money for adolescent girls in more transformative feminist directions. Funding decision-making processes are not communicated in publicly available data.

Global Resilience Fund is a partnership between social justice funders who committed to resourcing girls' and young women's activism through the COVID-19 crisis. The fund is also housed at and facilitated by Purposeful, which met the administrative costs of the Fund from its own core resources as an act of solidarity with activist communities during the pandemic crisis. The fund was conceived in partnership with Women Win, who are co-leading outreach and fundraising. Funding decisions are made by a panel of girl, non-binary, and young women activists.

WOMEN'S FUNDS

Intermediary funders we reviewed in the women's funds sub-category are 12 in number. It is important to note that some overlap exists between women's funds and feminist adolescent girls' funders. However, the research analyzed women's funds specifically as stand-alone intermediary funders with an interest in and influence over the adolescent girls funding field. Some of these funds joined the survey and workshops while others could not, due to time and capacity constraints.

Women's funds stand out for their transformational framing and practices. Because this group of funders is promoting transformational work, more information is available as to how frameworks are implemented in practice. As such, our analysis provides additional detail as to whom they are funding and how. Women's funds most commonly distribute funding to *community-based groups; young feminist led; formal adult-led organizations centering girls; and registered girl-led organizing*. Others receiving funding are *intermediaries; collectives; unregistered groups; and unregistered girl-led organizing*. This places women's funds in closest proximity to activist organizing.

Women's funds are prime examples of the alchemist role that makes some intermediary funders so useful within the adolescent girls funding landscape. Most of the source funders that support women's funds range from not representing any transformational funding practices or approaches, to being somewhat

transformational funders. Interestingly, all of the private foundations reviewed for this research support women's funds, as do most of the bilateral and some of the private sector funders. Women's funds also secure substantial funding from high-net worth philanthropists as well as donations from the general public. This wide spectrum of funding sources suggests that women's funds have been evolving the art of resource mobilization and funder advocacy.

Women's funds comprise the most well developed funding distribution infrastructure for feminist movement building. At present, only some women's funds have an explicit focus on adolescent girls, whereas others do not. This infrastructure could be leveraged to cultivate a funding ecosystem for adolescent girls if women's funds are interested in not only making the feminist commitment, but also the commitment, strategies, and practices required to actually reach girls. Women's funds appear to play a key role in consistently moving money from flowing in restricted ways which situate girls as beneficiaries, toward flowing in transformational and feminist ways, providing additional evidence of their role as alchemists who can shift politics as well as money.

3. Funder collaborations

This section looks at the two sub-categories of collaborations among funders: advocacy collaborations and funder groups.

ADVOCACY COLLABORATIVES

Advocacy collaboratives we reviewed are two in number. These collaborations are very important for the adolescent girls funding landscape. They often bring together source funders with a diversity of intermediary funders and other actors — many of which are highlighted in this research — together with adolescent girls and their allies. Power dynamics in those spaces are often unequal and unfair towards girls. At the same time, not taking part in these spaces would erase the positions and inputs of transformative feminist approaches, while other players with more opportunist, restricted approaches would capture and lead the space and access the resources.

Equal Measures 2030 is an independent civil society and private sector-led partnership that envisions a world where gender equality is achieved, and every girl and woman counts and is counted. To achieve this, it connects data and evidence with advocacy and action. That means, in part, making sure girls' and women's movements, advocates, and decision-makers have easy-to-use data and evidence to guide efforts to reach the transformational agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and leave no one behind. The partnership is a joint effort of leading regional and global organizations from civil society, and the development and private sectors, including: the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET); Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW);

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF); Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM); Data2X; the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC); KPMG International; ONE Campaign; Plan International and Women Deliver.

Generation Equality Forum is a UN Women initiative that brought together governments, corporations and change makers from around the world to define and announce ambitious investments and policies. It is not an advocacy collaborative in and of itself, but rather an approach by UN Women to develop its new strategy. It brought together diverse stakeholders who embarked on a 5-year journey to accelerate equality, leadership and opportunity for women and girls worldwide. This work will culminate in 2026. As discussed earlier in this report, tracking the money for adolescent girls in particular will be a challenge, given adolescent girls were 'mainstreamed' across all of the strategy pillars despite significant advocacy for a specific adolescent girls focused pillar.

FUNDERS GROUPS

Funders groups we reviewed were two in number. Funders groups are networks of grantmaking philanthropists. The funders groups named here are playing a critical role supporting funders in the landscape by bringing together membership around a particular issue, population or framework of interest and building either a collective strategy, knowledge or advocacy hub as

well as peer support and learning spaces. While these groups often host or initiate pooled funds, the main purpose of these groups is not the funding pool itself, but rather to collaborate in other ways, which makes these collaboratives more fluid and open for different levels of engagement among their membership. Members of these collaborations share at least one core issue in common and may have diverse frameworks and intervention strategies, making it difficult to review and analyze the membership for such collaboratives as a monolith. This diversity offers a member experienced polarity between agreeing upon shared frameworks or practices among all members and advocating and influencing among and across the membership.

Funders engage in funder groups for many reasons, including to learn about how to transform their adolescent girl funding practices. Funders groups can offer a learning environment that enables funders to experiment, while simultaneously working to shift and change their institutions over time. Funders groups enter the landscape from the children's funding sector and the women's funding sector. At the same time, these particular funders may hold deeper analyses of the adolescent girls funding politics and practices and

they present an interesting opportunity to explore cultivating a more feminist funding ecosystem for adolescent girls.

Elevate Children Funders Group is a network of philanthropic organizations *“focused exclusively on the wellbeing and rights of children and youth”* and more specifically *“the most marginalized and vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.”* They *“support children and youth by building a community of funders and creating spaces for: greater learning and effectiveness in how we use our individual resources; more collaboration and alignment across our philanthropic strategies; collective action for more and better funding, and support for our wider field.”*⁴⁰

Gender Funders CoLab is a network that mobilizes funders to support the women's rights ecosystem and bring more and better resources to the landscape. Collectively they leverage more than \$200 million annually toward advancing women's human rights. In their words: *“We mobilize funders to share knowledge, deepen networks, and expand resources for the women's rights field. Together we are supporting a better-connected and better-resourced ecosystem of organizations dedicated to women's human rights.”*⁴¹

40 See <https://elevatechildren.org/> Accessed June 9, 2023.

41 See <https://www.genderfunderscolab.org/> Accessed June 9, 2023.



CHAPTER 4

Understanding how funding streams shape the landscape

Searching for the money that flows to adolescent girls often feels like wandering a valley floor within the mountains, crossing a stream every now and then, and seeing only the features of the landscape within the immediate view. The larger picture and its interconnectedness is obscured, shrouded by the lack of clear and consistent data and tracking, like an incomplete map. Our research therefore offers sensemaking of the features of the funding landscape — first by looking at the actors, and now, in this chapter, by defining and analyzing the funding streams that represent the collective priorities of those actors.

It bears noting that an ecosystem approach to understanding funding for adolescent girls assumes a coherent funding field exists and can be quantified and analyzed using available data sources. The reality we found was quite different, as noted throughout this report. With no coherent, singular field, understanding

Key Messages 1/2

- Funders allocate their resources based on what impact they seek to make in the world. This is influenced by a variety of factors, such as immediate need; conditions placed on their own resources; political positioning and changing priorities.
- Unpacking funding flows through different streams has revealed that adolescent girls are rarely seen as political actors, and are mostly framed as beneficiaries.
- With increasing interest in resourcing adolescent girls as a population, there is a real opportunity for introducing transformational funding frameworks, influencing funding distributions to grassroots actors and promoting girls' agency within funding flows.

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the money flowing toward adolescent girls required our research to cast a broad net — first toward actor types and funding streams, and then diving deeper to unpack the entry points, goals, engagement strategies, and roles of adolescent girls within funding processes.

As documented in chapter 3, we first collected the names of the actual actors who comprise the landscape through a snowball methodology relying on the collective knowledge bank of the working group and research team. While not exhaustive, the nearly 71 institutions and

initiatives sampled in our research provided a broad net of entry points, politics and practices. We then analyzed all of the funding flows to adolescent girls surfaced by the research to determine and differentiate the distinct funding streams in the landscape — and reveal another view of the forest. The results of this analysis are shared in this chapter.

Defining the funding streams

Funding streams are the result of the decisions funders make about how and where to spend their resources — and ultimately what impact they seek to make in the world. Adolescent girls — like any demographic group — can be located in multiple funding streams. Similarly, funders rarely flow all their funds through one stream; instead they spread their funding across multiple.

Understanding how funding streams form, flow and ultimately reach (or fail to reach) adolescent girls gives us deeper insights into the larger funding landscape for adolescent girls. With a funding streams analysis, what emerges is an understanding of the complexities at play both across the landscape, and within the specific funding flows themselves. It also highlights how some funding can be harmful and thus provides funders with guidance on reshaping their funding modalities.

Key Messages 2/2

We identified three broad (not all inclusive) categories of funding streams for adolescent girls, based on:

- **Populations**, such as women, children and youth. Data parameters vary greatly in these streams and adolescent girls' needs are lost or overlooked. Children's funding represents a massive share of money and power, and is dominated by UNICEF and Save the Children, both of which often use protectionist, development-type framing in regards to adolescent girls
- **Issues**, such as health, education, child marriage, safety and violence prevention. Funders in these streams tend to adopt more restricted, project based, economic development framings and flow funding to larger international organizations, instead of local organizations. Girls usually have little say in how funding is used, and yet issues such as education are described by girls as some of the most important in their lives
- **Intervention**, including humanitarian, development and movement building. These streams have significant resources — mostly flowing through the development stream. Development financing however, is driven by and aligns with the agendas of national donor governments in the North and their changing priorities. The approach to girls is almost always as beneficiaries, with bilaterals choosing the focus countries and issue areas. As a priority population, girls' programming moves on a continuum from safe to highly politically charged when introducing a feminist perspective. The movement building funding stream differs radically. Most movement building funders are private foundations and women's funds, with a few governments — Ireland, Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands — also beginning to make it a priority. These funders enter the landscape with a social justice strategy and transformational framework.

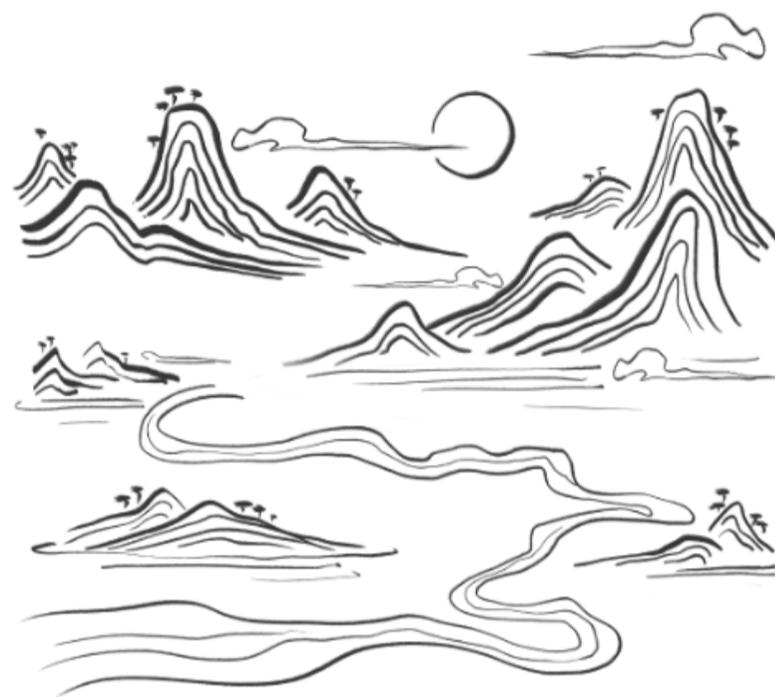
Here again, the taxonomy (see annex 3) can be used to create a visual representation of where the streams sit in relation to the two critical axes: First, do funders resourcing these streams see adolescent girls as *beneficiaries* or political actors; and second, are their strategies grounded in transformational frameworks or not?

Our research landed on a mountain landscape as a visual metaphor to illustrate how funding streams form and flow (see figure 7, below).⁴² Each mountain represents a source of funds. But by the time the funding flows from the mountain to the river and eventually to an adolescent girl, it is not clear which mountains it came from, how it formed, or the twists and turns that happened along the way. Describing the mountains and the streams is the central framework and process of our research. The objective is to better understand the **politics, practices and power** within the landscape and to make this visible for girls and their allies.

We identified three broad categories of funding streams based on **population group, issue area, or intervention type** toward which funders directed their

funding.⁴³ Note that within each category, there are distinct funding streams.

Figure 7. Funding streams



What follows is the naming, framing, and high-level descriptions for each funding stream, along with some illustrative examples where possible. The descriptions are not exhaustive, as girls may be situated as a priority population in other funding streams not addressed in this research. Our research focused on the most present streams as a starting point for understanding the behavior of different funders across multiple streams.

42 Image Credit: Chinese style PNG designed By 588ku from pngtree.com.

43 The researchers realize this is not an exhaustive list or analysis of funding streams; girls can be found in other funding streams, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights or human rights funding. The missing streams in this analysis are not less important. Additional research to more deeply and fully understand funding streams is needed.

1. Population funding streams

This category brings together funding streams based on specific population groups identified by a funder as critical to the success of its mission. The four sub-categories making up this funding stream are:

- Feminist funding for adolescent girls
- Women's funding
- Children's funding
- Youth funding

Feminist funding for adolescent girls

Given the focus and departure point of this research, the feminist adolescent girls funding stream is afforded a deeper analysis in a stand-alone section (see chapter 5).

Women

Funding for adolescent girls can be found within the women's funding stream. There are divergent frameworks within the broad women's funding stream that could be grouped together based on whether or not they employ transformational strategies. Transformational frameworks include: feminist; intersectional; human

rights; and gender justice. Those without transformational frameworks include: individual empowerment⁴⁴; development (i.e. improving women's lives is good for development); and broader gender equality. Analyzing women's funding on a continuum across these two distinct groupings offers a way of seeing that funding is skewed toward the end of the continuum that is not transformational, with less funding on the more political, transformational-framed end.

Sometimes women's funding is expanded to women and girls, especially when funding streams enter the landscape as a population and issue-specific stream. When women and girls are described as the population of interest, girls are often invisible and their realities, situations and circumstances are not well recognized or addressed. Funders in this space typically do not disaggregate their data nor have they established common programming and funding approaches; for example, between 2011 and 2015, 40 women's funds granted a total of \$222 million in 2011-2015 to women and girls but it is not possible to determine how much of this funding went to girls.⁴⁵

All funders of women and girls as a population tend to agree they want to

44 Note on women's empowerment frameworks: the concept has drifted since original feminist meanings which included structural and transformative change with a focus on women's agency, collective organizing, patriarchal social norms. Concepts are more commonly understood now in terms of the economic dimensions of women's empowerment, and equating empowerment with women's access to productive resources.

45 Prospera Funding Trends 2011-2015, <https://www.prospera-inwf.org/#!/-5-year-trends/>.

advance, improve, and change the position of *both* women and girls in society.

However, women receive and benefit from most of the funding. Funders justify the disproportionate focus on women by saying that improving the economic situation of women will benefit girls and overall communities. But in our experience, the logic does not hold as women have the tendency to perpetuate the same sexist and adultist norms that constrain girls, especially given their role as guardians of culture and tradition in many societies.

Funders in the women's stream also focus on girls' leadership and political participation. The emphasis, however, is often on building future leaders rather than understanding girls' agency and promoting girls' leadership in the present moment. Funders assume that child-focused programming will meet girls' present-day needs and that building leadership only has a pay-off in the future, when girls become adults and take leadership roles in their communities. This is just another example of girls falling through the cracks.

While disaggregating girls from women's funding in this stream is not possible, our analysis of feminist adolescent girls' funders — many of which fund *women and girls* as priority populations — is illustrative of the limited resources intentionally flowing to girls with the commitment, specific strategies and practices that girls require when *women and girls* are both stated as a priority population. There is no coherent practice across the women's funding stream, although there are some

agreements and consistent approaches among actors such as women's funds and some private foundations who use a transformational framework. A convergence of funding practices would translate into funding feminist-led women's rights efforts with girls and women as political actors and it would include flexible, core, long-term support to grassroots groups and organizations across the spectrum of interventions.

The grouping of women's funding that does not utilize transformational frameworks and focuses on women's economic empowerment as the way to shift power, financially prevails over women's rights and feminist organizing. Funders using these kinds of frameworks enter the landscape with significantly larger resources than other actors, thus influencing the larger landscape. *Gender Equality* framing is increasingly conflated with rights-based, feminist funding — and arguably co-opted by funders and other actors funding in ways that do not recognize girls' agency. However, this framework stops short of being a transformational approach because it focuses on achieving equality within existing systems, rather than acknowledging the systemic oppressions that perpetuate and uphold inequality.

Similarly problematic is a focus on the individual empowerment of women and girls so they can lift themselves out of poverty. A related theme is investing in women and girls as assets who then lift up whole communities and societies.

These practices often focus on short-term capacity-building interventions, approaching girls and women as beneficiaries of programs created by others and de-contextualizing interventions.

Actors holding larger resources and more access to influential spaces often control the narrative and divert important conversations that matter to girls. Feminist, rights-based funders are expanding their presence and making headway to impact the discourse. Still, it is important to note some funders adopt feminist language but not the practices — and, not surprisingly, the funding does not follow the rhetoric (drawing parallels with the disparities between the language and practices of private funders detailed in chapter 3).

Given two distinct entry points, girls show up differently. Within the women’s funding stream, feminist rights-based funders recognize girls as political actors in the same way they do women (although there is room for improvement, such as addressing adultism within funding and practices, as well as increasing involvement of girls at different levels, etc).⁴⁶ For funders using

an individual or gender equality approach within the women’s funding stream, girls are visible and recognized as beneficiaries more so than as political actors.

Children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) frames children’s rights in four ways: the rights to *survival, development, protection and participation*. Of these, participation is the least realized of the four rights. The human rights concept of *duty bearer* is an important contribution to children’s rights framing, as it assigns to specific adults the responsibility for protecting these rights and ensuring children can access them. Normally, these adults are government officials, as well as parents and other caregivers.⁴⁷

Since the early 2000s, the majority of children’s funding has been framed around child development or child protection approaches. However, no recognized, coherent children’s funding framework exists, nor does a clear set of definitions and concepts. Instead, children’s funding is framed within children’s, youth, and women’s rights. Funding flows toward

46 John Bell defined adultism in 1995 as “behaviors and attitudes based on the assumptions that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without agreement. This mistreatment is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs, and attitudes, (which underlie) the systematic mistreatment and disrespect of young people.” Bell, J. (1995). *Understanding Adultism: A Key to Developing Positive Youth-Adult Relationships*. Youthbuild USA. Reprinted 2003, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.nuadc.org/articles/pdf/understanding_adultism.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1647703029731587&usg=AOvVaw1hMtCzUQ3yGBTOf5Np4eUo.

47 International Save the Children Alliance (2007), *Getting it Right for Children, A practitioners’ guide to child rights programming*. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/getting_it_right.pdf.

a matrix of issues, themes, age groups and identities across sectors and through systems using different approaches. Large amounts of funding are flowing in siloed ways, not reaching communities directly and not including communities as part of the decision-making process. Children, young people, and their families and communities are mostly framed as beneficiaries, and are not afforded the space to express their needs and develop solutions.

This framing also extends to adolescent girls. That being said, examples can be found where girls are not framed as beneficiaries and where programmes center more firmly on the *participation* approaches described in the CRC. Members of the Elevate Children Funders Group are one example of funders focusing on this; Rejuvenate offers a living archive toward an eventual Hub for actors working at this intersection.^{48,49}

Our research found signs of distrust between children and young people — including adolescent girls — and a range of actors in the children’s funding stream, including INGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and public and private foundations.⁵⁰ It is important to note

that similar tensions often exist in many funding landscapes — people often feel unheard and overlooked by institutions that are designed to help them. For adolescent girls, the issue is about having a stronger role in shaping the resources that come to them so they are more flexible, more consistent and more aligned to their real needs. Too often, girls see programmes as vehicles for funders to achieve their narrow development outcomes, and not to meet girls where they are with what they need.

Among some actors, children’s funding is recognizing evolving capacities and developmental stages and how they relate to the widely varying realities of children and adolescents. While there are significant differences between a 3-year old girl child and a 16-year old adolescent girl, there is a need for the harmonization of both children’s and youth funding frameworks, particularly in relation to recognising their rights to participate in ways that are political and not tokenistic.

Children’s funding represents a massive share of money and power relative to other streams. The children’s funding arena is dominated by UNICEF and Save the Children in terms of framing,

48 <https://elevatechildren.org/> Accessed July 2021.

49 <https://rejuvenate.global/about-rejuvenate/> Accessed July 2021.

50 Keshavarzian, G. and Carroll, A., (2019), *Pulling Back the Curtain*, Elevate Children’s Funder’s Group, https://wordpress.foundationcenter.org/elevatechildren/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2019/12/ECFG_TrendsAnalysisReport_December_2019-5.pdf?_ga=2.221060952.1916156133.1575951325-487665504.1575951325.

both of which mostly use protectionist, development-type framing in regards to adolescent girls. UNICEF and Save the Children are intermediary funders who rely on a variety of income sources to fuel their work, including grants from governments, foundations and corporations and broader funding from individual funders (mostly in the Global North). Their funds come with more restrictions and constraints. Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) is among the largest funders in this stream, and is a source funder with its own resources to invest with relatively few restrictions. These key funders in this stream occupy different places in the funding landscape and have varying degrees of power across the field:

UNICEF is the largest and most influential actor in the children's funding arena. In 2019, total contributions to UNICEF were over \$6.4 billion. The public sector contributed the largest share: \$4.74 billion. UNICEF's top three resource partners in 2019 were:

- United States: \$743 million
- United Kingdom: \$494 million
- Germany: \$464 million

Private sector contributions from National Committees, individual funders, corporations and foundations totaled \$1.45 million. The largest funders in this category were:

- United States National Committees: \$299 million
- Japan National Committee: \$145 million
- Germany National Committee: \$101 million⁵¹

Save the Children Federation is also among the largest and most influential actors in the children's funding space, with a 2019 total revenue of \$782 million.⁵²

Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) is the largest private children's funding foundation. In 2019, CIFF approved \$386 million in "new charitable investments", with \$269 million disbursed in 2019 through their Addis Ababa, Beijing, Delhi, London and Nairobi offices. CIFF describes itself as focused on systemic change, whose "*portfolio is regularly rebalanced away from interventions that seek to optimise the status quo, towards investments with transformative potential.*"⁵³

51 United Nations Children's Fund, (2019) *Funding Compendium 2019*, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/funding-compendium-2019>.

52 Save the Children Federation, Inc. (2020) <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/images/annual-report/2020/2020-scus-990.pdf>.

53 Children's Investment Fund Foundation, 'Our approach and values', <https://ciff.org/about-us/our-approach-and-values/> accessed July 5 2019.

Youth

The majority of youth funding flows through development frameworks. Youth funding lacks a cohesive framework and each funder defines their own age-range and other parameters. Funding is often compartmentalized by issue or theme, and while there are many of these, most funding flows toward reproductive health, civic participation, and economic development. All three of these issues have strong potential to pay demographic dividends that strengthen national economies.

Emerging themes among youth funding flows include broader health issues, technology and climate. In 2020, the OECD published a report capturing this moment in the youth funding stream, titled: *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice*. The report examined trust in government, transitions to autonomous life, and intergenerational justice.⁵⁴

Rather than receiving specific attention to address the unique disadvantages they face because they are young, youth are seen by funders as a priority group simply by being part of the general population that any given program or funding plan is intended to reach.⁵⁵ Identifying power

holders and influential funding institutions in the youth funding arena is challenging. Following consultations and a desk review, we believe that the most significant youth funders are bilateral funders including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

2. Issues funding stream

This category focuses on the priority issues that funders seek to address through their grantmaking strategies. Funders in this stream tend to adopt frameworks which offer restricted, outcome based funding that positions girls as beneficiaries and flow funding to larger international organizations, rather than more local organizations. Girls usually have little say in how funding is used in issue funding streams. The research reviewed five issues where adolescent girls are named as priorities by funders — or that adolescent girls themselves identified as significant concerns:

- Health
- Education
- Child Marriage
- Safety/Violence Prevention
- Climate

54 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice : Fit for all generations?* <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>.

55 See <https://www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/donors/themes/challenges/> accessed July 5, 2021.

Health

As a sector, health receives significant attention from all types of funders. But funding for adolescent girls' health is narrowly defined as reproductive health, with nutrition sometimes included as important for girls' future reproductive lives. The mental health of adolescent girls is a new dimension beginning to receive small amounts of funding, with some recognition of the formative (and gendered) physical, emotional and social changes that occur during adolescence.

While health issues are often framed in terms of achieving health in and of itself, justification of funding allocations is predominantly framed in economic development terms, centering on healthy pregnancy and child survival and the ways this can be achieved in service to the economic prosperity of nations. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) 2019 funding forecast states, *“Political leaders can raise awareness among their governments about the high cost-effectiveness of investing in health and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), and the large health, social, and economic returns that*

*could result from increased domestic spending on SRHR.”*⁵⁶ WHO's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda dominates the narrative, and the positioning of reproductive health within that framework is contentious.⁵⁷ While the agenda refers to SRHR, very little funding is flowing to *sexual* health and rights.

Funding flows for issues framed in economic development terms are significantly larger than when issues are situated in rights-based or political frameworks. The UHC agenda is a prime example. It defines the problem in terms of lack of accessibility to reproductive health 'supplies' and services, as well as other intervention points, such as addressing anemia in nutrition programs. Furthermore, political tensions exist between gender and reproductive justice and colonial and white supremacist approaches to SRHR funding, with vastly different expectations of and funding flows to brown and black girls, compared to girls who are white.⁵⁸ Decision-making and control of the narrative is held by governments and national political parties where there is a continued rise in conservatism, and among private

56 Schäferhoff, M., (2019), *Funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights in low- and middle-income countries: threats, outlook and opportunities*, The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Open Consultants and the Center for Policy Impact in Global Health, https://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2019/srhr_forecast_web.pdf accessed July 5, 2021.

57 World Health Organization (2021), 'Universal Health Coverage (UHC)', [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc)) accessed July 5, 2021.

58 Roberts, D. (2015) 'Reproductive Justice, Not Just Rights', *Dissent Magazine*, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/reproductive-justice-not-just-rights> accessed June 12, 2023.

foundations, multilateral institutions, and the development banks that finance global health systems.

With regards to power holders, the US Government is the largest bilateral funder of global health with their total health funding in 2019 standing at \$11 billion.⁵⁹ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is the largest private funder of global health with their grantmaking budget in 2019 for Global Health being \$1,475 billion. International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the largest intervention and service provider globally for SRHR with an annual budget in 2019 of \$163.7 million.⁶⁰ Within this larger stream of funding, our research was not able to dissect how much money flows towards adolescent girls from the available data.

Education

Funding for adolescent girls' education is essential to move girls out of poverty, increase their access to opportunity, and expand their choices in life. The education funding stream is large and well-developed, with both source and intermediary funders supporting education initiatives that either include girls or focus on them exclusively.



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) (1/2)

BMGF's 2019 Annual Report stated their total 2019 grantmaking budget was \$5 billion. A significant portion of this went toward major public health programs. Here are three of the initiatives that are most likely to flow funding towards adolescent girls:⁶¹

- The Global Health program's total spending in 2019 was \$1.47 billion. Within that program, 10 percent went to Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Discovery and Tools (\$147 million)
- The Global Development program's total spending in 2019 was \$1.71 billion. Within that program:
 - ▶ 7 percent went to nutrition (\$119 million)
 - ▶ 14 percent went to maternal health (\$240 million)
 - ▶ 14 percent went to family planning (\$240 million)
- The Global Growth and Opportunity program's total spending in 2019 was \$676 million. Within that program, 5 percent went to Gender Equality (\$33.8 million)



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59 KFF (2019) 'The US Government and Global Health', <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-u-s-government-and-global-health/>.

60 International Planned Parenthood Foundation (2019), 'Financial Statements 2019', <https://www.ippf.org/resource/ippf-financial-statements-2019>.

61 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2019), *Annual Report 2019*, <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/financials/annual-reports/annual-report-2019>.

Similar to health, education is often framed as an end in and of itself, while justification for funding centers on economic development and makes the case that education is essential for economic prosperity. However, this framework does not consistently connect education to girls' agency, civic participation, and leadership development. Divergent frameworks that focus on individual empowerment, feminism, human rights and justice receive less funding — and also hold tremendous opportunity for actors funding education to increase girls' power in their communities.

Education traditionally has been a popular focus with funders, partly because the focus on children is seen as relatively free of political tensions among and across constituencies and stakeholders. That popularity can diminish, however, when the education model adds in civic education as a pathway to leadership and agency that might challenge power structures. In the meantime, feminists have sought to integrate gender as a social process to address the structural barriers to girls' access to education and quality of learning experience.

Among the most dominant funding practices are those where funding flows to governments and large INGOs aimed at reaching large numbers of adolescent girls through girls-only clubs and safe space programming, which are framed as 'adolescent girls infrastructure.' Adolescent girls and the local organizations that serve them often have limited say in the use of these funds. A divergent practice



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) (2/2)

These programs total \$780 million — or about 16 percent of BMGF's 2019 grantmaking. While it was obvious that women and children benefited from these programs, we were not able to determine how much of the \$780 million might benefit adolescent girls because the numbers are not disaggregated by population type. It underscores the point that, like most funders, BMGF reaches girls (and other demographic groups) through the lens of issue funding streams in which girls are included (or not included) depending on the nature of the initiative and the perception of how central girls are to addressing an issue. In any case, \$780 million is a significant amount of money, and the fact that a portion of that is likely flowing to adolescent girls is more than most other large funders can say. That said, BMGF, like so many other funders, could do more inside the issues it prioritizes to elevate girls and their expressed needs — and ultimately drive more resources to them.

is that of integrating girls' education at a more local, community-based level with flexible, general support for addressing the gendered experience of existing education systems. This often includes support for community awareness and engagement.

Governments and national political parties, along with the World Bank and United Nations agencies, hold power and control the narrative in the education

funding stream because the former sets policy and the latter finances the policy implementation. When girls do have the opportunity to attend school, it often proves difficult to address the gender inequality socialized through formal education systems, which in turn creates unsafe, unfair and unequal conditions. In chapter 6, we offer solutions to address this dynamic as part of building a more fair, inclusive and effective funding ecosystem for girls. The answer is not, of course, to defund education, but rather to make resources more aligned and accountable to girls' expressed needs — and to bring girls more decisively into the funding process. The education funding stream is one girls identify as most essential to their lives and futures. While girls' attendance and educational attainment have increased significantly in the past three decades, the daily experience often requires girls to navigate unsafe and unequal environments over which they have little control.

Child marriage

Child marriage is a global issue disproportionately faced by adolescent girls over their male peers. The practice is perpetuated by gender inequality, poverty, social norms and insecurity. Funding entry points to this issue come from the full spectrum of conservative to progressive politics, with divergent goals ranging from ending child marriage to ensuring that girls can choose if, when and whom they marry.

Funding flows are primarily directed towards ending child marriage in the Global South, with a limited focus on the Global North. Girls Not Brides, a global partnership formed in 2011 with over 1,500 members, has helped bring attention and coherence to the issue. For example, Girls Not Brides and its partners have helped ensure that agreements on child marriage require intervention beyond legislative change and should include addressing social and cultural norms, along with a range of other interconnected issues (such as health, education, economics and safety).

Despite increasing coherence, not all funding frameworks are transformational, with some still singularly focused on legal frameworks that center on marriage age. Funding flows for adolescent girls who are married can be particularly difficult to track, as marriage in many contexts changes how girls and their communities understand their identity. For example, married girls are often identified as young women rather than married adolescent girls. This can be highly problematic, as married adolescent girls often are not able to access the same resources as unmarried girls their same age — or, for that matter, the resources available to older married women.

As in all funding streams reviewed, adolescent girls and the local organizations that serve them often have limited say in the use of funds. In part, restricted funding is driven by mitigating risk, including for fraudulent use of funding. Issue based funding is also often restricted to a narrow

range of what works activities — for example, a belief that education is the key to ending child marriage. These strong perspectives often held by source funders can limit funding flows to more holistic, bottom-up approaches. An example of this is funding for grassroots organizations by women’s funds who source their funding from bilateral funders. Women’s funds understand that addressing child marriage is inherently political given its roots in patriarchy, gender inequality, economics, and income inequality and are inclined toward a complex approach to funding. The critical social movement work required to dismantle patriarchy and address gender equality, creating the transformational change that definitively leads to ending child marriage and ensuring girls’ choice of whether, when, and whom they marry can often go unsupported as a result of restricted funding.

Most funder entry points to the child marriage issue are through a range of frameworks. While framings vary, girls’ agency is not widely recognized in funding flows and girls are often understood primarily as ‘beneficiaries’. Actors, are increasingly introducing transformational framing (through considering gender and/or feminism) into the issue of child marriage to influence distributions of funding to grassroots actors and to promote girls’ agency within funding flows. These include:



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Girls First Fund (1/2)

“Around the world, millions of girls are married before the age of 18, putting their health and wellbeing at risk. We champion community-led efforts to ensure that girls and young women can create their own futures. We bring together funders to fund community-based organizations that are working on the front lines to stop the practice of child marriage and early unions”⁶²

Girls First Fund is a funder collaborative supported by public and private philanthropic organizations and individual philanthropists, including major funders like CIFF and the Ford Foundation. Girls and grantee partners are involved in the design of the fund’s grantmaking strategy.

2019 was a learning year for Girls First Fund, with pilot grantmaking in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, India, Nepal, Niger, and Uganda to allow the Fund to learn across different geographies and contexts. Girls First Fund distributed \$10.3 million in grants, with 86 percent of grants made to young women- and women-led organizations.



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62 See <https://girlsfirstfund.org/> accessed July 5, 2021.

- Girls First Fund, a funder collaboration that supports communities to end child marriage
- Girls Not Brides, a membership organization
- Child, Early & Forced Marriage & Unions and Sexuality Working Group
- UNICEF and UNFPA's Global Program to End Child Marriage also distributes funding to governments and NGOs to deliver sectoral and community programming around child marriage

Safety and violence prevention

The safety and violence prevention funding stream enters the landscape in dramatically varying ways. Funding that flows into the landscape through movements and grassroots actors supports interconnected issues, and the vast majority of funding will therefore address safety and violence prevention given the omnipresence of violence in girls' lives.

Funding entering the landscape through development and humanitarian sectors, meanwhile, is most commonly rooted in the Violence Against Children (VAC) and Violence Against Women (VAW) frameworks. Funding from each of these frameworks enters the adolescent girls funding landscape in different ways, and notably the VAC framework is a subset of the broader child protection funding



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Girls First Fund (2/2)

Child marriage is perhaps the most widely and diversely framed adolescent girl issue and one that sits at the nexus between the children's and women's rights funding streams. The Fund's framing recognizes girls' agency by engaging them in strategy development and giving first-year learning grants to develop plans for how they will use funding. Understanding how Fund members negotiate around the tensions in the children's and women's rights sectors may provide insight into strategies for maturing the adolescent girl funding sector.

stream not analyzed in this research. Both VAC and VAW frameworks recognize adolescent girls, but both miss the critical conceptual element of how girls experience violence, which differs in important ways from the experiences of boys and women.

VAC frameworks conceptualize violence by typology, using three subtypes: self-directed violence, interpersonal, and collective violence, and are further conceptualized by age, relationship to perpetrator, and location of violence. Gender norms are cited as the primary root cause of violence inflicted on children.⁶³ This reality is reflected in INSPIRE, an

63 Veitch H. and Baigazieva, S., (2021), 'Safeguarding for youth activism: Taking a feminist approach', Rejuvenate, <https://rejuvenate.global/safeguarding-for-youth-activism-taking-a-feminist-approach/> accessed July 5, 2021.

evidenced-based technical package of solutions to combat violence created by 10 agencies with a long history of child protection work, including UNICEF and WHO.⁶⁴ VAC frameworks can be protective, and when a purely protective approach is used, it can act as an obstacle to young people's agency, self-representation, and a role in their own protection. It is worth noting that one of the seven evidence-based strategies included in the INSPIRE package is life skills and child participation.

VAW frameworks use a gender and power analysis as the basis for violence conceptualization, but often lack a perspective on the specific risks that adolescent girls face because they are both young and female. Neither framework adequately addresses the unique vulnerabilities of adolescent girls to violence.⁶⁵ Efforts to harmonize VAC and VAW frameworks are underway, which may result in more effective funding for promoting adolescent girls' safety, including the adoption of newer adolescent-centered thinking, such as

transitional and feminist safeguarding practices.^{66, 67}

Within these safety and protection frameworks — as well as across the children's funding landscape — inherent tensions exist between a girl's right to protection and her right to agency. The funding generally flows more robustly to the protection side of the argument, with significant consequences for work in movement building and increasing girls' power in communities.

Like the broader adolescent girls funding landscape, safety and violence prevention funding is difficult to track. VAC prevention work is funded by governments at similar levels as prevention of VAW work, with roughly \$511.1 million directed to reducing child violence and \$427 million to addressing gender-based violence in 2018.⁶⁸ Far less funding is flowing towards work that sees power-building as a violence prevention strategy, which would align more with VAW as it is based on a power and gender analysis with movement work.

64 See [End-violence.org/inspire](https://end-violence.org/inspire) Accessed December 14, 2021.

65 Ellsberg, M. et al., (2017), 'Violence Against Adolescent Girls: Falling Through the Cracks?' Background paper, Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017, Know Violence in Childhood, New Delhi, India.

66 Guedes A. et al., (2016) 'Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children', *Glob Health Action*, vol. 9:31516. doi:10.3402/gha.v9.31516.

67 Holmes, D., (2018), 'Transitional safeguarding from adolescence to adulthood', *Research in Practice*, <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/news-views/2018/august/transitional-safeguarding-from-adolescence-to-adulthood/> accessed July 5, 2021.

68 World Vision International (2019), 'Counting Pennies 2', <https://www.wvi.org/counting-pennies> accessed December 14, 2021; Hanssen, S. with Development Initiatives, (2020), *Gender-based violence and the nexus: global lessons from the Syria crisis response for financing, policy and practice*, <https://devinit.org/resources/gbv-nexus-global-syria-crisis/>.

Linking key aspects of safety and violence prevention to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs indicators has created space for governments to act more deliberately. But this has not yet translated to larger, trackable funding flows to violence and safety work in general, nor to adolescent girls in particular.

Most funded programs are led by adults and adopt a protection from violence agenda. Violence against girls is invisibilized in many settings as it is often interpreted as a cultural phenomenon. Given the levels of violence girls face, a lot of grassroots work with girls has a violence response and healing component, but funders often do not resource this type of work.

Many practices have been created as a result of funding priorities, instead of priorities stemming from the organizing and movement work happening with girls in communities. At the same time, there is limited funding for work where VAC and VAW overlap and intersect. Power struggles and how the space is organized also impact where the funding goes. Some of the key movement organizers are too small and so their work remains unrecognized and underfunded. Much of



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

The UN Trust Fund awards grants to initiatives that demonstrate that violence against women and girls can be systematically addressed, reduced and, with persistence, eliminated. Since its creation in 1996, the UN Trust Fund has awarded \$128 million to 462 initiatives in 139 countries and territories. The current portfolio comprises 120 grants totaling \$50 million in 80 countries and territories, which is just a fraction of applications received.⁶⁹ While we were not able to identify funding amounts and distributions for girls as distinct from ‘women and girls’, the UN Trust Fund has been funding primarily civil society organizations (CSO) and only CSO’s projects since 2018.

the funding goes into research instead of actual activities that help with safety and violence prevention.

In the dominant narrative, girls are often seen as passive victims, but a lot of young feminists (and others) who are organizing and doing often unfunded work are using a different narrative that centers on agency, survivors and change-makers.

69 UN Women (2021), ‘UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women’, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/trust-funds/un-trust-fund-to-end-violence-against-women>.

Climate

There is no coherent climate funding framework with regards to girls. Some alliances are bringing a gender lens to climate work, such as the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), but do not specifically include a focus on girls. Funding often comes from climate focused funders to work alongside gender-focused organizations. For example, The Green Livelihoods Alliance (GLA) is a strategic partnership between a dozen organizations⁷⁰ involved in sustainable livelihoods, including the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Girls are deeply involved in climate action and rank it high as an issue they care about. But it is unclear how and if their work is funded. The narrative within this stream often acknowledges the impacts on adolescent girls and young women, but the extent to which this narrative translates to funding for girls is uncertain.

3. Intervention funding streams

This category focuses on the type of intervention identified by funders as central to their grantmaking. Rather than

focus on a single issue or population group, funders frame their investments through the lens of three different modalities of intervention:

- Humanitarian
- Development
- Movement Building

Humanitarian

Humanitarian funding streams aim to meet basic needs during crises and provide life-saving services. Many funders in recent years have shifted their rhetoric and policies toward a nexus approach that considers the overlap between humanitarian work and other areas (for example, the need to align humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches.)

This stream is not known for explicit feminist framing, though recent analysis is providing new insights and evidence of girls' agendas, priorities, funds and achievements, as well as creating awareness of the co-existence of girls' resilience and vulnerabilities at times of crisis.⁷¹

The humanitarian funding stream is heavily dominated by bilateral funding flowing into the multilateral

70 Organizations include Milieudefensie, Gaia Amazonas, IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL), Non-timber forest products — exchange programme (NTFP-EP), the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), Tropenbos International (TBI) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

71 Jochim, J. et al., (2021), *Girl-led activism in humanitarian crises: Implications for programmes and policymaking in COVID-19*, Kings College London, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/girl-led-activism-in-humanitarian-crises-implications-for-programmes-and-policymaking-in-covid-19>.

implementing agencies and INGOs. It has strong links to the humanitarian funding cycle and coordinated annual appeals and is tracked by the United Nations Office of Coordinated Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA).⁷² There is an ongoing debate about the percentage of humanitarian funding that flows through UN agencies, leading to multiple ‘levels’ within the funding system and associated tensions about the quality (and quantity) of funding at each level. Much of this debate centers on the degree to which flexibility and funding for core costs are passed on to partners. An emerging localization agenda has also surfaced, with youth funding built into the Youth Compact guidelines of *With Us and For Us*, which elaborates on different models of participation and youth engagement within local contexts.⁷³

The humanitarian funding stream’s engagement with adolescent girls is rooted in the assumption that emergencies increase violence against girls (as well as women and children). However, the framework lacks recognition of the political and cultural realities pre-dating the emergency itself. Emergency response funding cycles are short-term by design, which creates ongoing tensions around funding for core organizational

costs, particularly for local NGOs that were there before the emergency and will remain there after.

The general approach to adolescent girls is as a group to be protected, providing absolute basic needs — for example, focusing on food security so girls are not sold into child marriage. At the same time, the provision of basic needs creates opportunities to engage girls in empowerment and build their negotiation skills so they can navigate a highly resource-constrained environment and find safe ways to secure their needs.

Development

Development is the dominant global funding paradigm and the largest funding stream. This intervention framework is rooted in growing economies and alleviating poverty in low and middle income countries. Development funding streams are numerous and well established, and vast systems — largely in the Global North — have emerged over 70 years to manage and deliver funds. Over more than 20 years, a growing reform movement has pushed back against existing development structures, contending that its roots in the Global North during the post-colonial and

72 See <https://www.unocha.org/>.

73 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, (2020), *With us & for us: Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*, UNICEF and NRC for the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/events/iasc-guidelines-working-and-young-people-humanitarian-and-protracted-crises>.

post-war era gave it a skewed perspective that ignored the historical analysis of why certain countries were advantaged or disadvantaged — and what support is appropriate for countries and population groups in today’s world.

Solutions were often conceptualized in the Global North, and Global South problems were only identified from a Global North perspective. The push back has been from Global South-based organizers and development professionals to decolonize the development field and incorporate more Global South-based solutions to problems identified from a local perspective, while also critiquing and decolonizing concepts like development and poverty. Few South-South cooperation spaces exist, and there is a call for creation of alternatives to the Bretton Woods institutions and other development banks such as BRICS Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the Russia Development Bank. Funders in the development funding stream rarely use a universal human rights framework, which has been adopted only by a few INGOs that are the top recipients of development funds.

Development practices are still largely focused on stimulating economies and industrialization, as well as providing basic needs. Examples include investments in

roads, schools, and healthcare systems development. Laws and regulations in donor countries often codify these practices — for example, requiring that large percentages of development investments go toward infrastructure.

Funders in the development funding stream make huge commitments, often with conditions attached and usually flowing directly through governments or public-private partnerships. One key difference between North-South to South-South development models is the plethora of conditions that Global North governments often attach to funding, requiring Global South governments to respect human rights, advance democratic governance and combat corruption, among other asks. South-South development models tend to take a more laissez-faire approach, with few prerequisites for a particular political or economic system and more latitude for cultural relativity around rights and leadership.⁷⁴

Development funding of community-based programmes comes mostly from Global North bilateral funders and private foundations, with implementation by INGOs and private development contractors, and local partners. In recent years, more funding has come from Global South countries as wealth grew in the region. Funding

74 Horner, R., (2019), ‘Towards a new paradigm of global development? Beyond the limits of international development’, *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 44:3, 2020, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0309132519836158>.

flowing primarily from the North has several implications. Firstly, there is a power dynamic involving private philanthropy making decisions on key development agendas based on their corporate interests — for example, Coca-Cola deciding how and where economic empowerment programs unfold. Secondly, it means funding may be targeted towards communities, but ultimately the narrative is controlled and shaped by the INGOs implementing the programmes. Lastly, because of the nature of development financing, much of this work is driven by and aligns with the agendas of national governments in the North and their changing priorities. The impact can be positive, as in the Canadian government’s feminist foreign policy; or negative, such as the United Kingdom’s shift to more conservative politics, which dramatically reshaped one of the world’s largest and most influential aid budgets.

The approach to girls within the development funding stream is almost always as beneficiaries, with bilaterals choosing the focus countries and issue areas. Girls’ participation can be found within pockets of programming. For example, some INGO initiatives provide an activity budget for local partners to use, but these funds often come with significant restrictions. There are also small pockets of programming focused on specific groups, such as local girl- or youth-led organizations. The power and control differentials across funders in the field are important to note. While INGOs put strict accountability and monitoring mechanisms on their partners, they often do that in response to restrictions

they themselves have to deal with from their government funders. As the money flows downstream, both money and decision-making power is stripped away, leaving girls with little influence over the programmes designed to help them.

As a priority population, girls’ programming moves on a spectrum from *safe* to *highly politically charged* when introducing a feminist perspective. For example, menstrual health topics are safe, but if programmes focus on girls’ economic empowerment or political participation, they stray into the *highly charged* end of the spectrum — and funding amounts diminish.

Many factors feed into the development sector’s reluctance to fully recognize — and financially support — adolescent girls’ rights, and in particular their sexual and reproductive rights. An individual funder’s perspective and position play a role, but so too does the political, legal and cultural context in many recipient countries, where the sexual and reproductive rights of girls may be constrained by law and social norms.

Many governments actively seek to curtail adolescent girls’ rights and see any funding towards agency, voice and movement building as threatening. High tensions exist around adolescent girls’ sexual and reproductive rights in the Global North and South; these are considered lightning rod issues in most societies, limiting the interests of many funders and causing those that do address the issue to conform to broader societal norms.

In terms of funding levels, the development funding stream has significant amounts of resources flowing through it — but not for adolescent girls' rights, agency and leadership specifically. Larger INGOs increasingly support adolescent girl programming — for example, Save the Children and Plan International — but only a small portion goes to girl-led organizing and collective action, and most programmes are not co-designed with girls or centered on their priorities.

Most development actors have a broad strokes approach to women and girls (which usually means women), and this is often the 'pocket-change' of the overall budget.⁷⁵ For example, ODA for 2017-2018 was \$153 billion, with just 1.3 percent of it committed to women's rights organizations (\$198 million). Again, there is no way to determine how much of this funding went to adolescent girls.⁷⁶

Movement building

Movements often emerge from direct experiences of injustice, and are changing in response to social and political contextual shifts. Movements can experience dramatic

changes in funding, depending on these contextual shifts and how movements themselves are organized. The movement building funding stream differs radically from other funding streams, partly because movements usually do not have coordinating bodies that bring together funding flows. Most of the actors funding movement-building are not governments or multilaterals and enter the landscape with a social justice strategy and framework.

Some governments are starting to name feminist movement building as part of their funding priorities, including Ireland, Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands. However, these governments still constitute a comparatively small percentage of total bilateral funding.

Movements require funding through a mix of strategies and sources, while the current funding field is focused mostly on a single issue as an entry point into movement building. Funding for the success of movement agendas — encompassing different geographies, intersections and connections with other issues or movements — is at the nascent stage. Those who do fund it offer flexible, core

⁷⁵ Association for Women's Rights in Development (2021), *Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing? Data snapshots and a call to action*, <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/new-brief-where-money-feminist-organizing>.

⁷⁶ Staszewska, K., Miller, K. and Lever, E., (2020), *Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements*, AWID and Mama Cash with support from the Count Me In! Consortium, <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/new-report-moving-more-money-drivers-change-how-funders-can-resource-feminist>.

funding, and are often intentional about subverting power as part of this work. Most of these funders are women's funds and private foundations, as well as members of the Gender Funders CoLab. On the flip side there is a co-option of movement language by newer, well-resourced organizations focused on gender equality, as well as campaigns and coalitions that describe themselves as movements.

Girl-led organizing has been relatively invisible in movement building funding. However, we are beginning to see examples of women's rights and feminist movement funders supporting girl-led organizing. Children-led and girl-led movements such as #CatCalls, March for Our Lives, and Fridays for Futures are led by school-aged students. Highly visible

girls such as Greta Thunberg are creating waves of response and recognition of girls' power and voice in issues beyond climate change. Positive signs are also emerging of support for girl-led advocacy in multilateral spaces, including the powerful voice of girls in the Generation Equality Forum in Paris and the launch of the Girls Fund by Purposeful and Plan International.

More so than in other areas, it is difficult to track the money for movement building. Much of the work is funded with money raised from individuals and channeled through informal structures. That said, the feminist adolescent girls' funders highlighted in chapter 5 are key drivers of movement building for adolescent girls and their data is shared later in this report.



CHAPTER 5

Learning from feminist funders resourcing adolescent girls

Our research aims to capture the defining features of the funding landscape by looking at the actors and the funding streams that represent the collective priorities of those actors. We recognize that feminist funders and framings are present in multiple funding streams across the landscape, and more concentrated in the women's and movement building funding streams. Feminist funders are affecting important change with their transformational funding frameworks. In this chapter, we seek to understand how feminist funders flow resources to adolescent girls, both politically and practically — and to highlight what they have learned from their approaches that might help other funders deliver more transformational funding. To conduct this deep-dive, 22 funders were invited to self-identify and opt in to complete a survey and join two workshops.

Key Messages

Lessons from feminist funders might help other funders deliver more transformational funding. Feminist funders who support adolescent girls do not yet wield significant resources relative to the broader funding landscape, but their novel strategies show a feminist approach that recognizes power dynamics, girls' agency and voice.

Feminist funders:

- Recognize the power they hold as an actor with financial resources and the need to deconstruct and address the power dynamics in their own practices
- Look beyond their own organizations to improve the funding landscape for girls through philanthropic advocacy with other funders
- Recognize girls' agency and power in their funding practices by engaging girls to identify priorities and make funding decisions
- Flow resources to girl-led and girl-centered organizations
- Strengthen capacity through both grants and practices such as organizational development and relationship-building to address power imbalances
- Adopt flexible funding practices that provide relatively unrestricted grants that cover the core costs of grassroots girl-led and girl-centered organizations
- Recognize that power dynamics in the funding landscape often make funding inaccessible to nontraditional grantees like collectives and unregistered groups and adopt a variety of new tactics to reach these organizations
- Work to find creative ways to ensure they hear and respond to girls as they express the realities of their daily lives and identify their needs

The following criteria were used to classify these types of funders:

- Commitment to feminist principles, practices, and aspirations
- Commitment to funding adolescent girls (including girl-led, young feminist led, or adult-led work) is explicit and financially backed
- Specific funding for adolescent girls is currently tracked, or soon to be tracked
- Adolescent girls' agency and voice are considerations in funding; they are not only viewed as passive beneficiaries of programs
- A range of participatory models are employed to engage girls at different levels of program design and/or decision-making and/or evaluation

Of the 22 funders we reached out to, 13 took part in the survey and workshops and self-identified themselves as feminists funders (see annex 2).⁷⁷

Feminist funders' budget breakdown⁷⁸

The total organizational budget for the 13 funders in 2021 was **\$91,439,994**. Their total grantmaking budget in 2021 was **\$41,295,389**. Organizational budget to grantmaking ratios vary by respondent,

depending on the size and number of direct programs implemented and other direct costs associated with organizational strategy and planning.

Figure 8 presents 2019 expenditures and 2021 budgets across three categories. We did not look at 2020 given that this was the year in which we were conducting the research, and funders were actively implementing funding against budgets.

The total organizational budgets for all funders increased 13.6 percent from 2019 to 2021. Eleven of the 13 funders grew their budgets over this period. This increase may be temporary, as most of the 13 funders are intermediary funders who raise funds from source funders, who in turn were investing more funds in COVID-19 response.

As the chart shows, the funders used their higher budget levels to fuel additional grantmaking, with interesting changes in the three categories we tracked.

- **Total grants** increased 8 percent from 2019 to 2021 for the 13 funders we analyzed
- **Unrestricted grants** increased a significant 33 percent from 2019 to 2021 — most likely in response to the global pandemic, where many funders unlocked restricted funding to support rapid response efforts

⁷⁷ Survey and workshops took place during the period of April – May 2021.

⁷⁸ Note that all figures in this section refer to the sum total for the 13 funders surveyed.

- **Grants to adolescent girl initiatives** increased 21 percent from 2019 to 2021 as the feminist funders directed more funding than ever to girls. Looked at another way, the total grantmaking

pie increased by about \$3 million over the two year period — and adolescent girls received more than half of the additional resources

Figure 8. Grant Making, Unrestricted, and Funding for Girls expenditures and budgets 2019 vs. 2021, in \$ US millions

Total grant making budget amount



Grant making unrestricted budget



Allocated budget specifically for adolescent girls



Funding sources for feminist funders

Private foundations are the most common source of funding for feminist funders who support adolescent girls. The feminist funders in our survey group also receive funding from women’s funds (whose primary source of funding is also private foundations), public foundations, INGOs, and corporate foundations.

While private foundations are well positioned to provide this funding, relying on them as a primary source of support is problematic. Private foundations often lack accountability to constituents in general — and to girls in particular. Furthermore, their decision-making processes lack transparency and funding levels can fluctuate dramatically based on endowment performance or sudden changes in strategy.

A private foundation, like any funder, can simply decide to no longer fund feminist funders (or any other type of organization) for any variety of reasons — sometimes the result of thoughtful strategic shifts that are transparently shared, and sometimes for abrupt and unknown reasons — leaving grantees with no resources or recourse. While all source funders can and do change what they fund, private foundations are significantly more free from external pressure against unpopular changes in funding flows than other funders, particularly bilaterals and multilaterals.

NoVo Foundation's role in flowing funds to feminist organizations supporting adolescent girls is especially notable. In 2020, as discussed in chapter 3, NoVo Foundation communicated a sudden and abrupt strategy shift. NoVo Foundation's departure from the landscape was particularly significant because they helped pioneer and champion feminist approaches to grantmaking and programs.

In our survey group, seven of the 13 feminist funders received funding from NoVo Foundation in 2019; in 2021, six were still receiving funding from NoVo Foundation, even as its funding for girls was coming to a close in this particular formation. In practical terms, NoVo Foundation transitioned administration of existing funding commitments within its Adolescent Girls Rights Initiative to the Tides Foundation. At the time of writing this report, what this means for NoVo Foundation or Tides Foundation

once funding commitments are met is not clear, nor is the long-term impact on the feminist funders of adolescent girl programs. In the short-term, however, NoVo Foundation's strategic shift away from adolescent girls was a significant and painful shock to the community of feminist funders, implementers and advocates working with and for adolescent girls.

Feminist funders play a role in flowing resources to adolescent girls at global, regional and national levels. As of 2021, four of the 13 in our survey group were funding globally and five were funding regionally. The balance of feminist funders operate at the national level.

Feminist funders who support adolescent girls do not yet wield significant resources relative to the broader funding landscape. Nevertheless, their novel strategies are reshaping the landscape and show a feminist approach that recognizes power dynamics, girls' agency and voice.

Setting funding priorities

Feminist funders that support adolescent girls are both responsive and intentional in their grantmaking. They direct funds by issue, theme, and sub-population, as well as by organizational type, size, and age. Funders that rely on a participatory grantmaking approach enable adolescent girls and young women to decide upon the priority issues that should receive funding.

The funders surveyed reported that, when asked, adolescent girls identified a number of priority issues to address, including:

- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- LGBTQIA+ organizing

The feminist funders in the survey group, meanwhile, have their own institutional and strategic priorities, which include:

- Climate and environmental justice
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Labor rights
- Livelihood and economic justice
- Violence prevention
- Civic participation, voice and leadership

Some feminist funders choose to define their priorities by population type — for example, refugee or internally displaced populations of girls; LGBTQI youth; Indigenous girls; Afro-descendant girls; and girls with disabilities. Others identify priorities by the type of organization they fund, such as women’s funds. Feminist funders also recognize that inequalities result in the need for supporting institutional development, emergent organizations, collaborative work and communications.

Politics

Feminist funders recognize the unequal power dynamics in girls’ realities as well as within the funding landscape. They understand that power lies at the center of social injustice and inequality. For girls specifically, this means the recognition of the need to dismantle existing systems, such as patriarchy, racism, and adultism and their different manifestations in girls’ lives across different contexts, as well as the role that age, gender, race and other identities play in girls’ lived realities.

“We aim to recognize and understand power relations, age specificities and diversity of experiences and backgrounds of girls.”
— FRIDA

Feminist funders also recognize the power they hold as an actor with financial resources and the need to deconstruct and address the power dynamics in their own practices. Additionally, they look beyond their own organizations to improve the funding landscape for girls through philanthropic advocacy with other funders. Part of this recognition includes seeing girls as experts of their own reality.

“We understand a feminist adolescent girls’ funder to mean a funder who recognizes and deconstructs the harmful power dynamics in the practice landscape to the benefit of girls and young women.”

— EMpower

“We are ambitiously working to reframe power in philanthropic practice, showing what is possible when girls are put at the centre of resource distribution.”

— Purposeful/WFG Fund

Translating politics to practices

When asked about their funding politics, feminist funders revealed key aspirations around these themes: identifying where work is still needed; determining how much funding is flowing through transformational feminist frameworks; and putting into practice a deeper understanding of girls as political actors. The following section shares lessons feminist funders have learned and direct perspectives from their experiences.

Recognize girls’ agency and power in their funding practices: Feminist funders do this by engaging girls to identify priorities and make funding decisions. Feminist funders also build girls’ power by resourcing girls who develop concrete solutions to the problems faced not only by girls but by their communities, nations, and the world.

“In our eyes, this means recognizing that [girls] are not “passive beneficiaries” of various programs but active leaders of processes.”

— Bulgarian Fund for Women

“To be a feminist funder for us means we trust girls, we trust their leadership, their expertise, their instincts, and their deep embodied knowledge about what it takes to do the work of justice.”

— Purposeful/WFG Fund

Flow resources to girl-centered and girl-led organizations: A majority of survey respondents flow funds to girl-led organizations, collectives and formal and informal groups. They also support ‘girl-centered’ organizations, particularly those that include girls in their decision-making, and those that embrace feminist values.

“For us, the self-led component that is part of our criteria is very important to make sure that the populations organizations seek to support are also part of the decision-making. Therefore, for us to be a feminist adolescent girls’ funder means that we only support organizations that are girl-centered and girl-led and embrace feminist values.”

— MamaCash

Strengthen capacity through both grants and practices: Feminist funders allocate funds for organizational development and relationship-building to address power imbalances. Funders in the survey group such as MADRE, FRIDA and Fondo

Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) provide resources for organizational development to help girl-led groups and grassroots girl-centered organizations strengthen their fundraising and governance. Some funders also provide funding to enable organizations to come together to learn from one another, develop relationships, and build support systems that help address inequalities.

“...In our capacity building and linking and learning program, we strive to ensure the experiences, context and work of young women are highlighted, so we facilitate spaces for peer learning and political dialogue.”

— FCAM

Adopt flexible funding practices: The lack of funding for girl-led and girl-centered organizations (particularly grassroots organizations) is often the result of funder criteria that restrict these organizations from applying for funding. Additionally, many funders are simply unwilling to provide the unrestricted funding that would be more manageable for grassroots organizations with limited capacity in grant-writing, financial management and monitoring systems. To overcome this harmful dynamic, many of the feminist funders surveyed have adopted flexible funding practices that provide relatively unrestricted grants that cover the core costs of grassroots girl-led and girl-centered organizations. This funding

requires trust-based relationships that offer grantees the flexibility to use funds based on the specific context in which they operate and their self-identified needs.

“Flexible and autonomous support is focused on respecting the knowledge, understanding, and assessment that communities have to plan, respond to their current needs, and their rapidly changing environment. This type of support enables movements to sustain and strengthen their efforts, develop capacity, and shift the dynamic from a simple act of resistance to a strategic battle against forces that often hold great capital and power, and perpetuate inequality and oppression.”

— Central America and Mexico Youth Fund (CAMY)

Make funding accessible to non-traditional groups: Feminist funders recognize that power dynamics in the funding landscape often make funding inaccessible to nontraditional grantees like collectives and unregistered groups. Feminist funders in the survey group have adopted a variety of new tactics to reach these organizations, which also include entities that face barriers due to their language, location, or modest budget size. The key is listening to girls and their allies to identify the barriers — and ways around them — that work for funders and girls. Creative solutions developed by funders such as FRIDA, Mama Cash, Global Fund for Women (GFW), MADRE and Purposeful include:

- Receiving applications and reporting in multiple languages

- Receiving applications and reporting by video presentation
- Providing core funding
- Using trust-based and participatory approaches to guide decision-making

Center girls' voices: Feminist funder practices are directly informed by listening to girls and centering what they say in processes and practices. Sometimes this means directly listening to girls; in other instances, girls' voices are heard and understood through intergenerational organizing work. Regardless, feminist funders in the survey group are working to find creative ways to ensure they hear and respond to girls as they express the realities of their daily lives and identify their needs. For many funders, this means shifting power to girls by involving them in decision-making, particularly around grantmaking and governance. Centering girls does not mean isolating them from their allies; rather it involves recognizing intergenerational organizing and the key role that girls' allies have played to shift beliefs, norms, systems and structures in favor of girls and their rights is also part of the strategy.

“FRIDA continues to engage in philanthropic advocacy collectives, spaces and networks, which also provided opportunities for girl advisors and grantee partners to amplify their expertise and agenda”
— FRIDA

“Our strategy for centering girls for stronger intergenerational movements provides the framework for the Global Fund for Women to focus on intergenerational leadership and deepening of our work to support girl-and young women-led movements globally.”

— GFW

Defining girl-centered and girl-led

Funding for adolescent girls is often described as *girl-centered* or *girl-led* but it is not always clear what defines each of these approaches, nor their close cousins, *with girls*, *for girls* and *by girls* (also, see Definition Box 1). This is evident not just within program design, but also at the multiple levels of governance, grantmaking, implementation, research, monitoring and evaluation.

Defining *girl-led* is perhaps the easier task. Girl-led groups are those founded by girls and the work is led by girls. While these groups may be registered or unregistered, decision-making is that of the girls who identify their own needs, design their own solutions, and lead the work. They often have adult allies and mentors to support them — but the work is unambiguously run by girls.

Girl-centered is more common, but somewhat harder to pin down and unpack. This term is generally understood as an approach to designing programming that involves girls in the process, so that programming responds to the unique and

gendered realities and situations of girls. However, no shared, consistently reflected definition of *girl-centered* work could be identified in the broader literature and landscape analysis. That said, the feminist funders in our survey group most often funded organizations led by girls or close allies that actively engage girls in setting priorities and making decisions. Feminist funders shared these perspectives on the terminology:

“Yes, a girl-centered approach to MADRE is ensuring that we understand the context in which girls are operating in, and ensuring our resources are able to reach them wherever they may be both geographically and in their activism.”
— MADRE

“Our organisation and programmes are girl-centred. By this we mean: your organisational mandate (mission, vision and goals) focuses on girls, your organisation works predominantly with girls, your organisation’s programming is shaped by adolescent girls’ contexts, needs, and perspectives.”
— *With and For Girls Awards, Girls, the Agents of Change, Learning Report*

“Work is implemented jointly with and for girls, but is led by adults. Adults enable girls to take active roles and agree on priorities and recommendations in a participatory way, ensuring girls’ interests are central and their voices heard. Both girls and adults create messages and recommendations.”
— FRIDA and MamaCash, *Girls to the Front*

Roles girls play in decision-making processes

Seven of the 13 funders stated that girls’ agency and power are recognized through the roles they play in decision-making processes. In practical terms, this takes the form of girls serving as members of advisory bodies and joining other applicants to help make grantmaking decisions.

Roles girls play in setting funders’ strategic direction

Eight of the 13 funders shared that girls play a role in setting the strategic direction for their work. These funders consulted girls during their strategic planning process, both on the overall strategy and the specific plans for adolescent girls. Feminist funders use diverse and creative ways to engage girls, such as:

- Consulting girls when developing their theory of change
- Hosting listening sessions and needs assessments with girls
- Appointing girls to formal advisory groups
- Convening forums to include girls in learning and sharing

Roles girls play in other aspects of feminist funders' work

All but one of the funders indicated they consult girls once in a while for special projects. Examples of such consultations include:

- Assessing and refining grant applications
- Developing learning systems
- Reviewing materials for projects
- Advising on campaigns or creative initiatives
- Convening girls to help set investment and advocacy agendas

It is important to note, in closing this chapter, there is a risk of tokenism in many of the strategies described above to include girls more deliberately and build systems that support them more effectively. **Tokenism can be deliberate or the inadvertent result of good intentions that are poorly executed.** Girls are keenly aware when they are being used as tokens and when their participation is genuine and meaningful. The feminist funders in our survey group are equally aware of the risk of girls being included, but not truly centered, listened to and afforded the opportunity and power to shape strategies and decisions. Indeed, several offered helpful guidance on how to shape an ideal funding ecosystem that would increase girls' power, which is the focus of the next chapter. ■



Section 3

Moving toward a feminist adolescent girls funding ecosystem



This research comes at a time when the funding landscape for adolescent girls is dramatically shifting. A number of complex factors are driving these changes: the global pandemic; growing movements for racial justice and climate action; violent backlash against activists for LGBTQI rights and safe access to abortion; and the ongoing threat from violent and anti-democratic political movements.

All of these trends shape the context in which adolescent girls and their allies are working to secure their access to resources, rights and power in their communities. This research set out to support them in this work by offering an understanding of resource flows for them. But, doing so requires a coherent adolescent girls funding field to exist

— and it does not (yet); our analysis of the data infrastructure, the landscape, the actors and funding streams, as presented thus far led us to this conclusion.

In this final section, our research scaffolds a feminist adolescent girls' funding ecosystem and presents directions that actors within the adolescent girls funding landscape can take beyond this report, to move toward an adolescent girls funding ecosystem. We have seen that when actors are accountable to girls, center their needs and priorities, and recognize girls' intersectional identities, transformative change happens (see chapter 5). This research and the girls funding ecosystem scaffolding is our offering to *all actors* who are interested in creating transformative change so that girls can thrive.





CHAPTER 6

Scaffolding a feminist funding ecosystem where girls can thrive

Grounding an ecosystem in adolescent girls' dreams, hopes and perspectives

Thirty-one girls aged 13–20 years came together in four virtual workshops (based on geography) with participants living in Brazil, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen during the months of May and June of 2021.

Our research team first asked girls to imagine a funding ecosystem where girls can thrive. What would it *look like, feel like, and practically do* with and for girls? Here is a summary of what they said:

Girls visualized different worlds and communities, both rural and urban, but always with a strong sense of community and allies at a communal level. The sensations and emotions they described

Key Messages (1/2)

To understand what an effective funding ecosystem would look like, we began by talking to girls. The overwhelming message is that **girls** imagine having a say in every aspect of their lives.

Based on what girls said, and on lessons learned from feminist adolescent girls funders that are already doing transformational work, we developed the scaffolding for a new, feminist ecosystem that is:

- **Accountable to adolescent girls:** Girls' intersectional identities are recognized and hold power within decision-making processes
- **Vibrant:** A healthy ecosystem relies on multiple actors and streams with the agility to change and adapt to shifting contexts and different environments with little rigidity
- **Coordinated and complementary:** This ecosystem is well coordinated, where actors make complementary contributions within their niche such that competition is not present
- **Collectivism:** Actors internalize the collective end goal as their own, with individual institutional goals contributing toward that end goal



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when imagining this world were **power, freedom, success, protection, safety, a strong cultural identity, confidence, love and joy.**

One of the most important aspects of this ecosystem was **the safety and protection** provided to girls so they can thrive and organize. Girls envisioned participating in public spaces where they feel safe and protected by their allies, creating a sense of freedom for them to continue to advocate for themselves and other girls — as well as to speak their minds, grow, and connect to new experiences.

Girls discussed their need to have **confidence and self-esteem** in order to speak up and interact with all the different actors in the funding ecosystem, such as teachers, community leaders, governments and funders. This confidence was linked to their protection from harassment and violence within their communities and public spaces; envisioning women in power supported them even further to feel this sense of safety and protection.

Key Messages (2/2)

Girls can thrive in this ecosystem because:

- It centers and recognizes them, not just by age, but also by girls' self-determined intersecting identities
- It values girls' expertise and is responsive to their expressed needs and priorities. Because girls are recognized as political actors, rather than beneficiaries, they have a role in decision-making over resources
- All actors find ways to deepen their accountability and responsiveness to girls' lived realities, by:
 - ▶ Prioritizing flexibility and funding core support
 - ▶ Trusting girls as experts of their own lived realities
 - ▶ Finding ways to decentralize power and decisions to ensure girls are connected to decision-making processes
 - ▶ Communicating with transparency and clarity about funding limitations and requirements; and
 - ▶ Partnering across the ecosystem with other funders, seeking to overcome limitations or barriers

Girls imagined having a say in every aspect of their lives. They imagined expressing themselves through how they dress, speak and have relationships with freedom and non-discrimination. This includes freedom to relate to funders in a way that feels natural to them and authentic to their lived experiences, rather than in formal and adult-centric ways.

Then we asked girls if they have *priority issues*. This is a summary of what they said:

- Access to sexual and reproductive health services and attainment of sexual and reproductive rights
- Emotional and psychosocial support; work focused on mental health
- Safety, protection and freedom from violence and discrimination, and eradicating patriarchal and macho culture
- Indigenous protection of the environment, and work led by girls around climate justice, campaigning, and resilience.
- Access to equal and quality education in supportive environments.
- Emergency and crisis response support, including response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other intersecting crises.

Lastly, girls talked about strategies and tactics that can be funded. Outlined below are needs and dreams identified by girls in the workshops. These are not to be understood as siloed funding priorities, but rather as what girls identify could be part of a coherent and comprehensive

funding approach that meets their basic needs and fulfills their dreams including:

- Girls' agency, voice, civic engagement and mobilization
- Girls exploring themselves and self expression/artistry
- Supporting girls' activism and mobilization around a diverse set of social justice issues

Enable girls to thrive

- Initiatives that work with parents and community members to change social norms and negative dominant narratives about girls
- Supporting architecture to fund girls directly
- Supporting feminist funders and women's funds/funders who fund girl-led/community groups directly

Knowledge building and research

- Knowledge generation led by and in service to girls, youth and intergenerational movements for the purposes of understanding the root causes of oppression

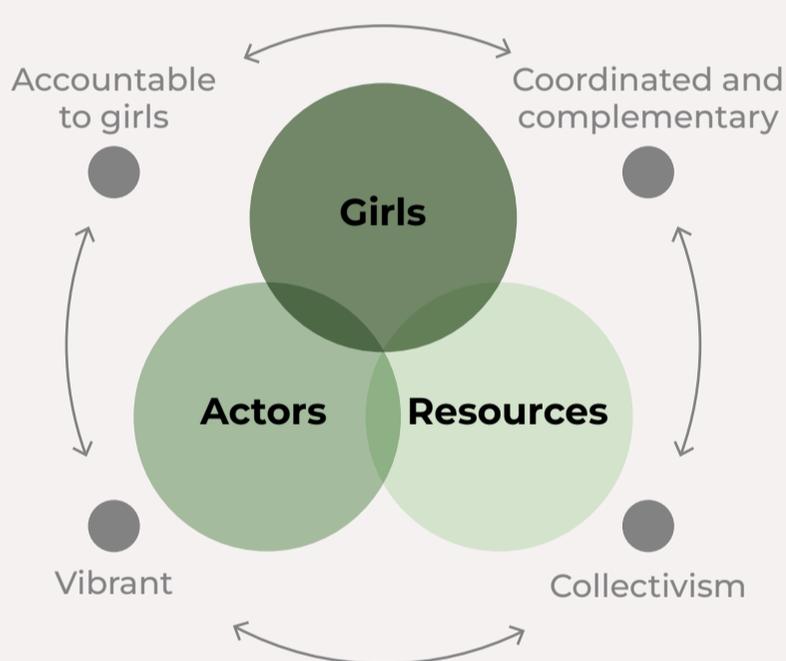


In this chapter, our research turns to what an effective funding ecosystem might look like — one that centers adolescent girls and is accountable to them. To understand the potential elements for this new ecosystem, we began by talking to girls to understand their experiences of the current landscape — and their vision for change. In addition to speaking to adolescent girls to get their direct insights, our research also surveyed feminist funders (see chapter 5) because

they are building *transformational* programming that sees girls as *political actors* from whom we can learn and build.

What emerged from these two lines of inquiry is **the scaffolding for an adolescent girls funding ecosystem where girls can truly thrive** (see figure 8). The scaffolding we offer has **four principles and three main elements**, which we define and describe below.

Figure 8. Scaffolding a feminist adolescent girls funding ecosystem



- **Girls** have a say in all aspects of their lives and are recognized as they self-determine and by their intersecting identities, context, and age
- **Actors** working in the adolescent girls funding ecosystem are diverse, and their relationships to resource flows can be as sources or recipients — or both
- Financial, political, and social **resources** are in abundance for girls agency, voice, mobilization, and basic needs

Four principles shape this feminist ecosystem

The four principles shaping this ecosystem — accountability to girls, vibrancy, complementarity, and collectivism — work together to make girls’ vision for having a say in all aspects of their lives a reality. The principles can be described as:

Accountable to adolescent girls: Girls and their contributions are valued and respected so much so that actors within the ecosystem hold themselves accountable to them. Girls’ intersectional identities are recognized, they are connected to and hold power within decision-making processes, and their contributions can be seen throughout the entire funding ecosystem.

Vibrant: A healthy ecosystem relies on multiple actors and streams with the agility to change and adapt to shifting contexts and different environments with little rigidity.

Coordinated and complimentary: This ecosystem is well coordinated among actors and within funding streams, where actors make complementary contributions within their niche such that competition is not present.

Collectivism: Actors within this healthy ecosystem internalize the collective end goal as their own and are not self-serving or attached to attributing successes to themselves as much as they are to contributing towards a larger goal.

Three elements are present in this ecosystem

Three elements — adolescent girls, resources, and actors — interact with one another within the transformational environment created by the four principles which ensures the ecosystem remains in balance.

Element one: Adolescent girls

Adolescent girls are the first element within this funding ecosystem (see definition box 1). The vast majority of sectoral and issue-based funding streams for adolescent girls are currently understood primarily through the lens

of age. To recognize girls' agency and power, however, the research points to an ecosystem that includes girls' self-determination within the definition of 'adolescent girl'. Self-determination is something that feminist funders have adopted with success, as noted in chapter 5. By listening to girls, feminist funders recognize that age and gender identity are an incomplete understanding of adolescent girls across different contexts, and even how girls self-identify as adult, as child, or as an adolescent can change fluidly and be based on different situations and circumstances in their lives — as well as in response to stated funding purposes.

Element two: Resources

Resources are the second element of this future funding ecosystem. Resources that exist in an ecosystem where adolescent girls can thrive include financial, political, and social resources. Financial and non-financial resources come from a wide range of sources, the diversity of which allow actors to respond to the different needs of adolescent girls.

Element three: Actors

The third element of this ecosystem are the actors. Actors working in the adolescent girls funding ecosystem are diverse, and their relationships to resource flows can be as sources or recipients, or both. Actors flow financial resources across and through all of the funding streams and to a diversity of other actors. While girls are recognized as actors in

this ecosystem, they are considered to be a distinct element because of their centrality to the ecosystem's effectiveness. Here are the range of actors that can work within the ecosystem, as well as their primary relationship to funding flows:

These actors play a role in **flowing resources into the ecosystem:**

- **Governments**⁷⁹: local, national, regional, bilateral funding/embassies
- **Multilaterals**: UN agencies, EU agencies, multilateral agencies, and multilateral development banks
- **Private sector and private foundations**: individual wealth holders, family, private, and corporate foundations, private development organizations
- **Public foundations and funds**: women's, children's, feminist and youth led funds
- **Non-governmental organizations**: international, regional and national community-based organizations
- **Consortia or networks**: collective funding mechanisms used by the above actors
- **Individuals**: self-generated income from membership fees, local enterprise, fee for service or democratic funding from individual contributions

These actors need **flexible resources, capacity strengthening and accompaniment resources** as a priority:

- **Girl-led groups/collectives/organizations**, including those funding girl activists and those providing scholarships and other financing options for girls' work
- **Young feminist/youth-led groups**, including those working with girls/girl centered work
- **Funding to adult led/feminist organizations**, including children's and women's organizations working with girls in transformational ways/girl centered work
- **Feminist funders/women's funds or organizations** that are moving resources directly to the aforementioned groups
- **Funding collaboratives** that have a dedicated mission to shifting practice and moving resources to girls

These actors need **dedicated resources** for adolescent girls as a priority:

- Educational institutions
- Health systems
- Humanitarian and rapid response funding

Bringing the ecosystem principles and the elements together

Girls need a funding ecosystem that centers them, and recognizes their self-determined intersecting identities — including the varying ways in which girls may define

79 Our research did not analyze funding from local and national governments, but we acknowledge the importance of these funders and recommend additional research on their impact on the adolescent girl funding ecosystem.

themselves as adolescents While girls' dynamic identities are difficult to define in absolute terms, it is critical to develop a generally accepted definition in order to enable and track dedicated funding flows to adolescent girls. Age is a particularly useful parameter for broad policy agendas and for linking to all types of data infrastructures. Disaggregating funding data by age and gender both recognizes this dynamic identity, and contributes to the data infrastructure that supports accountability to girls. Girls' self-determination should not be a deterrent. Funders can find ways to collect and share data disaggregated by age and gender as well as enter into nuanced conversations about how to achieve a definition of 'adolescent girl'.

Whether it is for funders resourcing policy and large scale programming or for funders flowing resources directly to girls, an expanded-beyond-age definition of 'adolescent girl' can:

- Create space for adolescent girls to self-determine their identity, which means enabling girls to autonomously self-identify their gender, their life stage (childhood, adulthood, or somewhere in between), their sexual orientation, or any other identity characteristics
- Recognize that the context and realities of girls impact how they self-identify (which may be different from how others identify them); there are varying and shifting personal, economic, political, social and environmental contexts in which girls live

Financial resources flow throughout this ecosystem in accountable and responsive ways. Girls are a primary audience for communicating funding criteria, amounts and distributions. In this way, girls can understand where the money for them comes from, how it can be accessed, by whom, for what, and at what levels. Resources flow in alignment with the expressed individual and collective needs of girls and the priorities they express, including from within social justice and feminist movements.

Significant flexible funding is flowing to collective girls' organizing and ally organizations that center girls and fully recognize their agency in this ecosystem. This includes funding for intergenerational work, including work conducted by women's rights organizations and community networks, girl-centered groups as well as strengthening movements to be more intergenerational and responsive to girls' expressed needs. Partnering with girl activists, organizations and movements to flow funding toward grassroots and girl-led agendas and embrace feminist models of non-hierarchical leadership are a crucial part of what creates and maintains an effective funding ecosystem for adolescent girls. At the heart of girl-centered funding is an awareness and recognition of the need to find concrete ways to work and consult with, and ensure funding is accountable to girls themselves.

This funding ecosystem consistently values girls' expertise and is responsive to their expressed needs and priorities.

Because girls are recognized as political actors, rather than beneficiaries, they have a role in decision-making about resources. Depending on an actor's role, size and the context in which they work, decision-making roles for girls may be more or less participatory. Many actors will *not* directly resource girl-led or young feminist-led groups: larger institutions, such as bilateral funders or private foundations, may instead support feminist, transformative funding organizations that are moving resources directly to girls and/or their allies centering girls in their work. Women's, feminist and public foundations, as well as some INGOs who are intentionally grantmaking in feminist ways, are likely positioned better to move resources quickly and flexibly,

building deeper partnerships with girls and their communities.

Recognizing the power relationships between actors and the collaboration and coherence across and among these different actors is a key part of an effective ecosystem. **All actors that have a dedicated and intentional focus on girls' wellbeing and rights, will find ways to deepen their accountability and responsiveness to girls' lived realities.** While the expression and application of this may vary depending on actors, at the heart is some coherence in principles and practice of how funders see girls as curators of their own collaborations with funders. Outlined below are practical ways for funders to do this.

Practical ways funders can bring elements together

Prioritize flexibility: Flexible funding to organizations is structured and administered in ways that enable responsive resources to reach girls and their allies at the local levels. This means source funders and larger intermediary funders take steps to minimize administrative burdens on local organizations, grassroots or girl-led groups, including only minimal and necessary/non-burdensome reporting, and being flexible about when money is distributed. In an ecosystem where girls can thrive, flexibility in funding administration is also extended to adolescent girls for their own work, and the work they do within intergenerational efforts in an observable proportion to that of their allies doing girl-centered work at the local, sub-national and national levels. When directly funding girls, flexible means funding girls in all the ways they do their work, not just with and through registered organizations. Flexible means sometimes funding directly⁸⁰ to girls' unregistered groups, as well as to their fiscal sponsors or host organizations, or funding other funders or organizations which are set up to fund in this way.



80 Examples of how direct can be provided to be inclusive of all girls include: transfers to individual bank accounts, cash payments, or payments via services such as Western Union.



Fund core support: Funding for general core support shifts decision-making power away from the funder towards the recipient. This power shift is critical to ensuring the funding ecosystem is responsive to adolescent girls' realities. Combined with flexibility in funding administration, this kind of funding can be extended through all levels of funding flows, so that decision-making power is brought as close as possible to adolescent girls and can be directly informed by their realities. Providing responsive core and multi-year support to girl-centered and girl-led organizations is critical. This includes funding, but also an expanded definition of *resourcing* to include organizational strengthening and other forms of accompaniment, such as mentorship.⁸¹



Trust girls: Trusting girls as experts of their own lived realities is key. Making girls' work and contributions visible to movement and funding actors supports the validity of girls' work and trust across the ecosystem. Trust also comes from building relationships over time. While not all funders are positioned to do this directly with adolescent girls, all funders can flow funding through the ecosystem in ways that promote and reinforce practices that build trust intergenerationally and among adolescent girls. Learnings from the work of funders⁸² can be readily transferred to building trusting relationships with adolescent girls.



Be accountable: An essential part of a healthy ecosystem is how funders recognize power and accountability in their work with and for girls. Not every funder may be ready or well positioned to include girls fully in their decision-making structures through participatory models such as advisory committees or collective peer voting processes. They can, however, find ways to decentralize power and decisions across different aspects of their work to ensure girls are connected to decision-making processes. For example, funders who cannot implement participatory grantmaking can build strategies in a participatory way, resulting

81 FRIDA Pluriverse offers ways that financial and non-financial support can enable feminist organizing. Accessed February 14, 2022 <https://youngfeministfund.org/frida-pluriverse/>

82 An in-depth analysis of what trusting relationships with young feminists looks like can be found in detail in the recommendations section of: FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund (2019), *No Straight Lines: Transformations with young feminist organisers*, <http://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/>

in portfolios that are accountable to adolescent girls. This could involve funding participatory funders, or creating partnerships with organizations who work with or center girls. Some keys to success are being accountable to both girls and feminist movements, learning from successful models and mitigating harmful power dynamics — especially those between funders and movements, girls and adults.



Build in transparency: A well functioning ecosystem has free-flowing information, care and resources from different actors, and a clear way to share work and learnings across different actors and streams. In an ideal ecosystem, girls are driving and deciding on where funding goes, while funders are holding the burden and are responsible for coordinating with one another. In addition, funders are communicating with transparency and clarity about funding limitations and requirements, as well as taking steps to partner across the ecosystem, explore cross-funder collaborations, and pool resources when seeking to overcome limitations or barriers to flowing funding in more transformational ways.⁸³

Abundant resources flow throughout the ecosystem to both meet girls' basic needs and their role as political actors — ensuring girls' full participation in society and the realization of their rights. Funding toward meeting girls' basic needs is not always in the form of general flexible support, and indeed not all funders are set up to distribute this kind of funding. This should not exclude such funders from this ecosystem; rather, transparency about each funder's priorities and limitations should inform their entry points within the ecosystem and clarify gaps for others

to fill. Coordinated, accountable efforts are key to this ecosystem.

An ecosystem approach to understanding funding for girls rights goes well beyond understanding the financial picture of funding flows. It is about understanding the relationships among actors and how resources flow in ways that support the cultivation of an ecosystem where girls can thrive. In our final chapter, we lay out opportunities for moving toward a feminist adolescent girls funding ecosystem.

83 We understand that inherently if the overall funding ecosystem continues to operate within the capitalist economic system, there will be funders who are bound by limited transparency. Our hope is that those funders will (a) work further towards more transparency; and (b) fund creative ways to contribute to girl centered funding processes through funder collaborations, etc.



CHAPTER 7

Beyond this report

This research is an offering and a conversation starter for all actors — including girls — in the adolescent girls funding landscape. For it to affect change toward a transformative funding ecosystem, we aim to catalyze more thinking and deeper research as well as collective conversations, including with

adolescent girls. Building a more effective funding ecosystem for adolescent girls will be a multi-year process. What follows here are some suggestions for moving beyond this report, especially among funders interested in doing transformational work with and for adolescent girls, to **convene, research, and advocate.**



Convene across funders and *with girls*: A starting point for any collective conversation can focus on the funding ecosystem scaffolding, with emergent collective processes and strategies around advocacy, resource mobilization, and practices. The next two to three years can significantly advance our research offering, given the research started just after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and the NoVo Foundation announcing their transition from adolescent girls funding landscape — conditions that severely limited the collective analysis of and strategizing around this research.





Research to deepen understanding of the landscape: Funders can use the taxonomy and ecosystem scaffolding to track, analyze, understand, and future-orient resources for adolescent girls. The taxonomy and scaffolding can be applied within institutions and across funder collaborations of all kinds to develop the data infrastructure that will support ongoing, coherent analysis of resources for adolescent girls and related action toward a transformational funding ecosystem. Development of guiding tools for how to use the taxonomy, and scaffolding is needed in advance of their use beyond this research. In addition to the use of these tools, we suggest the following be undertaken to deepen understanding and build on the offerings of this research:

- **Illustrative case studies:** In-depth case studies can offer learning for actors and concrete ways of working to those who are new to funding adolescent girls
- **Funding streams research:** In-depth analysis of each funding stream is needed to understand the patterns of behaviors, frameworks, and potentially illuminate actual funding amounts
- **‘Within’ institutions’ dynamics research:** We turned to a funding streams analysis after realizing that within a funding institution, there can be several divergent approaches to funding adolescent girls. Looking deeper into institutional dynamics, developing case studies, and facilitating internal alignment work within institutions that experience this dynamic could be a useful step forward towards a coherent transformational ecosystem
- **Program funding research:** We primarily looked at direct funding (grantmaking) support towards adolescent girls; we did not look at programmatic budgets of institutions working directly with and prioritizing adolescent girls. Further research on programmatic budgets could shine light on how much funding is flowing toward girls and the extent to which those funds actually reach and support girls
- **Government contributions research:** We did not delve into particular governments’ funding as it was beyond the scope of this landscape analysis. We believe it is essential to develop in-depth case studies of country-level funding flows, using a consistent methodology across countries for comparative analysis and learning so as to inform future roles of government funding for adolescent girls



Engage in mutual advocacy and learning: Our research encourages an opening of the space between feminist and other funders, for mutual advocacy and cultivating opportunities for the kinds of learning that each field can offer. Advocacy goals should be determined through *collective conversations that center girls* across funders and in concert with deepening understanding of the adolescent girls funding landscape. The following practices can help:

- **Deepen practice learning around resourcing adolescent girls:** Collaborative structures and spaces are needed for funders learning how to recognize adolescent girls as a constituency and resource them. Developing practice case studies coming out of these learning processes across different funder types would be an important contribution from these processes
- **Varied and contextualized approaches to mutual advocacy:** An ecosystem where girls can thrive requires that all actors move into relationships with other actors toward a deeper understanding of how to center girls' needs in resource flows. Funders can pursue atypical partnerships, across local and national levels and including governments

Perhaps more so than the generations before them, adolescent girls around the world are holding more responsibilities, power, and burden to determine their own present and future, as well as their communities' futures. A thriving funding ecosystem that can support them on their journeys is *our* collective responsibility, power, and burden. In it, our greatest hope is that this research starts conversations and offers the energy for evolving and establishing a funding

ecosystem within which girls can see themselves. In this ecosystem, dedicated resources to meet girls' basic needs and politics flow in abundance and with full recognition of girls' agency. Partnering with organizations using a feminist transformational approach and engaging with girls directly can inform how funding is structured and flows. Feminist funders doing philanthropic advocacy work are ready for and welcome these kinds of thought partnerships. ■

Annexes

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ANNEX 1:

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ANNEX 2:

Actors Sample

Sampling and analysis of actors included in the landscape analysis of this research was completed during the period of July-December 2020. This table presents the

71 actors included in our sample and the 13 feminist funders that responded to a survey and participated in workshops.

Source funders

Bilaterals

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
 - Danida
 - Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
 - German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ)
 - Federal Republic of Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BIZ)
 - Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD)
 - The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO)
 - The Kingdom of Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa)
 - The US Agency for International Development (USAID)
-

Private foundations

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
 - Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)
 - David & Lucile Packard Foundation
 - Echidna Giving
 - Ford Foundation
 - Foundation for a Just Society (FJS)
 - Kendeda Fund
 - NoVo Foundation
 - Oak Foundation
 - Open Society Foundation (OSF)
 - The Summit Foundation
 - Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
 - William & Flora Hewlett Foundation
-

Source funders

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Private sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estee Lauder• Laudes Foundation (formerly C&A Foundation);• Standard Chartered |
|----------------|--|
-

Intermediary funders

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Multilaterals | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UN Women• United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)• United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)• United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) |
|---------------|---|
-

- | | |
|-------|--|
| INGOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action Aid• CARE• CREA• ICRW• IWDA• Mercy Corps• Plan International• Population Council• Promundo• Purposeful• Room to Read• Save the Children• World Vision |
|-------|--|
-

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Public foundations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Jewish World Service (AJWS)• Comic Relief• EMpower–The Emerging Markets Foundation• Firelight Foundation• Madre• Thousand Currents |
|--------------------|--|
-

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Children's funds | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPPF)• Children's Rights Innovation Fund• Global Fund for Children |
|------------------|--|
-

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Girls' funds | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Girls First Fund• Global Resilience Fund• With and For Girls Collective |
|--------------|---|
-

Intermediary funders

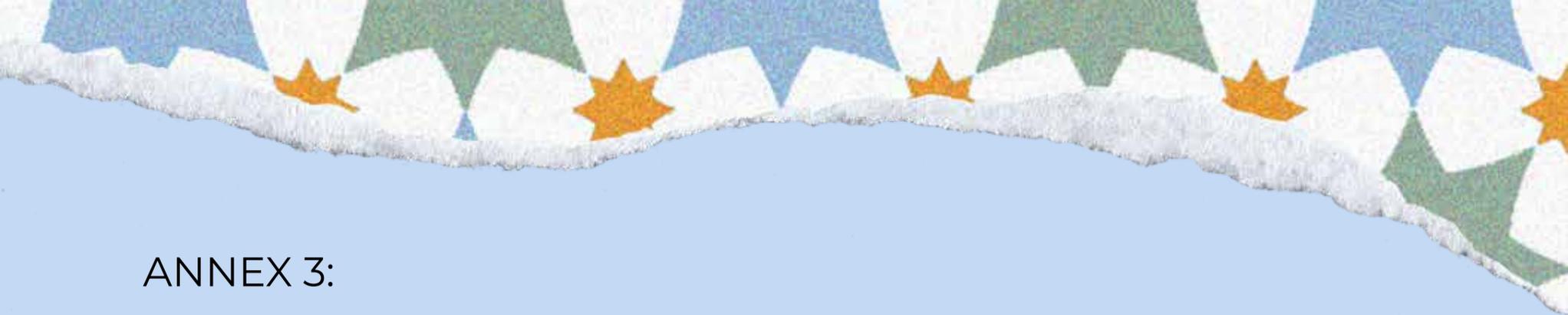
- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Women's funds | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fondo Alquimia• Central American Women's Fund• Filia• FRIDA• Global Fund for Women• HerFund• Fondo Lunaria• Mama Cash• Mongolian Women's Fund• Ukrainian Women's Fund• Women Win• Women's Fund Asia |
|---------------|--|
-

Funder collaborations

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Advocacy collaboratives | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal Measures 2030• Generation Equality |
| Funders groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elevate Children Funders Group• Grant-makers for Girls of Color• Gender Funders CoLab |
-

Feminist funders

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Feminist funders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global Fund for Women (GFW)• HER Fund• FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund (FRIDA)• Bulgarian Fund for Women (BFW)• MamaCash• Ukrainian Women's Fund• Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM)• MADRE• EMpower–The Emerging Markets Foundation• Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF)• Central America and Mexico Youth Fund (CAMY Fund) at Seattle International Foundation• With and For Girls Fund (WFG Fund) at Purposeful• Anonymous funder |
|------------------|--|
-



ANNEX 3:

Taxonomy

Created in August 2020. Revised in April 2021.

Taxonomy: codes, select definitions, and properties⁸⁴

Key:

- GRANDPARENT CODES ARE IN BOLD, ALL CAPS
- Parent codes are in bold
- Child codes are in regular text, followed by definitions in the table

FUNDER TYPE

Funding Actor Types (69)

- INGO: 14
- Bilateral: 9
- Multilateral: 5
- Women's Fund: 12
- Private Foundation: 13
- Public Foundation: 6
- Private Sector: 3
- Children's funder: 3
- Girls Funder Collective: 3
- Social Venture: 1

Field Support Infrastructure (8):

- Advocacy Collaborative: 2
- Campaign: 2
- Funder Collaborative: 3
- Global Partnership: 1

⁸⁴ In some cases it is difficult to create a definition, as the concept might be in evolution. Where a concept is not well defined, we define using a list of properties that the term embraces as a step toward a more complete definition

FUNDER POLITICS

Framing

Human rights framework	Funder explicitly names human rights as a baseline for its approach to funding and programming
Feminist funding framework	Funder explicitly names feminist approach to its funding and programming, properties of which include participatory models of decision-making and centering girls and young feminists experiences
Intersectional funding framework	<p><i>“Grantmaking that takes into consideration the ways in which multiple systems of oppression are interwoven in people’s lives, communities, cultures, and institutions and how they impact people differently based on where each person sits and their lived experience”</i></p> <p>— <i>Journey Towards Intersectional Grant Making Report</i></p>
Justice	Funder embraces and explicitly communicates funding with justice as an outcome, which may include different types of justice: gender, social, climate, etc.
Power building	Funder explicitly names centering girls, their experiences, needs, priorities in its funding and articulated intent to build power, with properties like engaging girls to influence, make decisions, and control solutions and programming that is impacting their lives and situations (girls have control and decision-making power)
Empowerment	Funder focuses on funding awareness raising and educating, building negotiation and communication skills, and capacity building of girls, and may or may not engage girls in program design, delivery, monitoring, evaluating (girls provide input, participate, engage but do not control, influence, decide)
Post-feminist/gender neutral framing	Funder does not have a gender specific approach to children's programming because it assumes that gender equality has already been reached and all children need to be funded and worked with the same. Funder has a gender neutral approach to funding.
Protectionist	Funder portrays girls and children overall as dependent, vulnerable and at risk of abuse and articulates that because children lack the capacity to care for themselves and require the protection of adults to ensure their proper growth and development (girls as beneficiaries)

Development	Funder portrays girls as a solution in which to invest in order to develop economies, and solve problems related to poverty, inequality, etc.
Charity	Funder portrays girls as victims who can be saved individually, without reference to and detached from any systemic or political understanding of root causes of the problems. Most often charity funders come from the global north and west to the global south and east with 'saving' mentality towards recipients of charitable donations
Instrumental	Funder portrays girls as wholly disconnected from the social, political, economic or other systems and contexts (e.g. invest in a girl, she will do the rest)

What drives funder decision-making and politics?

Value for money approach	Approach focusing on the best return on investment, deriving from private sector influence on development and philanthropy and focusing on quantitative measurement logframes to determine best programs to put money behind
Innovation	Approach that is focussed on innovation and trying out new solutions for existing problems
Beliefs and convictions, world view	Approach that is motivated by a desire for a particular worldview or political system to become dominant; political position (e.g. universality vs. cultural relativity)
Evidence driven approach	Approach that wants to see evidence of return on investment: if we put our resources into this, how do we know it was successful? How does investing in girls and in a particular strategy for girls bring the most benefit and what is the evidence supporting it?
Trend / celebrity	Issues come to the forefront either because it is picked up by a celebrity, an influencer, or by mass/social media making it trendy for others to bring into focus and channel funding (divert resources). This drive is often not long lasting and can be costly to other issues that get deprioritized.
Political cause/ interests	When an elected official, presidential spouse, or political appointee picks up an issue of focus and uses it for political gain and/or recognition and sometimes also mobilizes public or private funding. This drive lasts as long as the person is in power and shifts when they are no longer in office or when the political environment changes.

New data/research	New data and research that gives evidence and recommendation to focus on a particular issue, strategy or population — commissioning of research could be from funders, or any other entity
Advocacy/pressures	Advocacy by activists, practitioners, funders — anyone in the field — that influences funder behavior to pick up a particular issue, strategy, or population
Crisis	Public health, political, economic, climate crisis impacting a population or geographical area

FUNDER PRACTICES

Funding administration

General operating/ core/flexible support	Funding that is not project based and includes institutional support and flexibility by the grantee to decide on how to distribute the grant
Annual grants	One-year grants that may or may not be renewable and can be project or core funding
Multi-year grants	Grants for two or more years
Program or project-based grants	Funding earmarked for a specific project and tied to project-based outcomes
Technical assistance grants	Supports management, administration, or other strengthening of organization or practice — not targeted toward beneficiaries
Seed, start-up, planning grants	Grants to start an organization or a major new program
Exit grants	One time/last time grants as part of funder's closing of the program or changing funding priority
Discretionary grants	One time grants that are usually made outside of general grant cycles in a faster time frame for emergency response, travel, convening, safety and security

Funding recipient types

Unregistered girl-led organizing	Grants fund girls who are organizing on self-determined issues; the girl-led organizing IS NOT in association with an institution or registered organization
Registered girl-led organizing	Grants fund girls who are organizing on self-determined issues; the girl-led organizing IS being done in association with an institution or registered organization
Young feminist led	Groups led by self defined feminists under the age of 30
Formal adult-led organizations centering girls in their work	<p>*The field does not have shared definitions of what girl-led and girl-centered work.</p> <p>For the purposes of our research: grants that fund adult led organizations with an organizational mandate (mission, vision and goals) focused on girls; organization works predominantly with girls; organization's programming is shaped by adolescent girls' contexts, needs, and perspectives.</p>
Formal adult-led organizations approaching girls as beneficiaries	Grants that fund adult led organizations with an organizational mandate (mission, vision and goals) focused on girls, but programming is NOT shaped by adolescent girls' contexts, needs, and perspectives.
Community-based or grassroots organizations	Grants that fund nonprofit groups that work at a local level to improve lives, usually focused across sectors and particular segments of the community; can also be grants to local political organizing groups.
Unregistered groups	Grants to groups that are not formally registered organizations, but have some track record of meeting a need in the community or for a particular population segment where they work
Collectives	Grants fund a group of entities that share or are motivated by at least one common issue or interest vis a vis girls; decision-making is decentralized and 'majority rules'. The collectives come together for the purpose of implementation, not regranting. (And different from funds, which are governed by a board and staff with decision-making authority)
Funding collaboratives	Large grants being distributed to a collective of institutions for programming and grantmaking collaboratively
Intermediaries	Grants fund intermediary organizations, such as women's funds, INGOs, or public foundations, to re-distribute to NGOs, CSOs, or other organizations at regional, national, or local levels

Decision-making

Board/trustees level decision	Decision-making power about grants is held by board and trustee
Executive level decision	Decision-making power is held by funder executives about grants to those impacted by funding decisions
Program level decision	Decision-making power is held by funder/practitioner program staff about grants to those impacted by funding decisions
Consultations with advisors on the ground	Practice of seeking the advice of stakeholders in decision-making process; advice may or may not be taken by decision-makers
Consultations with girls/young women	Practice of seeking the advice from girls/young women in decision-making process; advice may or may not be taken by decision-makers
Participatory model with advisors on the ground	Decision-making power about grants is held by advisors located in the communities impacted by funding decisions
Participatory model with girls/young women	Decision-making power about grants is held by girls/young women who are impacted by funding decisions

Issues funded

- Health
- Sexuality
- Education
- Violence prevention/mitigation/response
- Child marriage prevention/mitigation
- Economic empowerment
- Voice, agency, participation
- Environment/climate

Strategies Funded

- Advocacy
- Capacity building/strengthening
- Scholarships
- Organizing
- Culture, norm change
- Asset building
- Leadership development
- Evidence generation

Broader Practice

Awareness and mitigation of safety risks	Funding that is considered with the safety and security of grant recipients in mind and includes safety and security support, protocols, and considerations in every stage of funding relationship from application to receiving money to reporting. Safety of the grantee is not compromised for legal or communication or convenience reasons of a funder.
Awareness and mitigation of power dynamics	Funder who acknowledges the inherent power dynamics in the relationship between them and applicant/grantee and works deliberately to acknowledge, mitigate, and minimize damage from power dynamics
Commitment to compensating girls, young women for their time and expertise	Funder who values time and effort of anyone they involve in their work from consultations to decision-making, ensuring there is fair and adequate compensation and value of the time and effort by all involved without hierarchy of paid staff and consultant vs volunteer and free labor by activists and community members
Anti-racist practices	Funder that explicitly communicates and practices anti-racist practices in all aspects of its work from staffing to grantmaking to decision-making
Trust in girls' expertise	Funder who inherently trusts the experiences of the girls and supports work that centers girls experiences and trusts girls needs
Responsive	Funding that is inherently 'keeping the hand on the pulse' of organizing and responds to the needs and priorities of the movements and organizers instead of creating strategies in isolation from the field and not adjusting them when context or situation changes

COVID-19 Shifts in funding landscape

- Increased emergency funding
- Decreased funding restrictions/
increased flexibility
- Increased funding restrictions/
decreased flexibility
- Exit from funding an issue,
population, priority
- Entry to funding an issue,
population, priority
- Adaptation of grantmaking cycles
- Faster decision-making
- Pauses to project-based activities

Impact on adolescent girls work

Delays or pauses in implementation	Anything that describes impact on girls work as a result of delays or pauses in implementation, e.g. decreased access to information, resources, services, connectivity among girls
Addressing immediate needs as opposed to strategic initiatives	Anything that describes shift in funding away from strategic, transformative work to meeting immediate needs as a result of funding shift related event

CURRENT LANDSCAPE/FUTURE ECOSYSTEM Current funding landscape

Current funding landscape	Anything that is being mentioned about the current funding landscape, practices, politics
----------------------------------	---

Ideal ecosystem

- Multiple funding sectors and actors
- Positive legislative frameworks/political will
- Participatory decision-making/uplifting girls voices

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Funding amounts for 2018

- Total budget of the institution
- Total grantmaking budget of the institution
- Grantmaking budget for girls' programming
- Grantmaking budget for children's programming
- Grantmaking budget for women's programming

Age Groups

8-17	
12-17	
18-35	Age (in years) capture is reflective of various taxonomy in the field according to the CRC, adulthood starts at age 18 years
Over 30	

Operational

"How can this research be helpful/ meaningful to your work?"	Responses to 'meaningful to your work' question posed during landscape interviews conducted in July 2020
Perceived challenges	Responses to 'perceived challenges' question posed during landscape interviews conducted in July 2020



ANNEX 4:

Methodologies

The research team for this project consisted of independent consultants, who offered their unique experiences, knowledge and expertise of the field of funding for adolescent girls. Deeply believing in and practicing participatory feminist research methodologies, the team did not rely only on their own knowledge and traditional research methodologies. Thus, from the very beginning of the project, experts in the field were interviewed, building up the research baseline, sharpening the key questions and identifying the desired outcomes of this research as part of the larger field building, influencing and strengthening strategy.

Based on the interviews, the team then brought together a Working Group consisting of nine members representing diverse funding institutions and expertise in the field. The Working Group engaged in interactive workshops and informed many of the research findings. The research team also conducted a literature review, survey, and extensive public data review.

Public data helps us understand how funders see themselves, as well as how they position themselves within the broader funding landscape. While some of what is communicated may be

purely aspirational, public data still offers insights into how funders frame their decisions, what issues and strategies they are most likely to support, and even what positions, perspectives, and arguments they may find most persuasive. There is also a lot to learn from what funders do not say: failure to mention transformative practices, such as participatory funding processes with adolescent girls, strongly suggests funders are using more traditional decision-making models. Crucial to understand is that public data cannot be used to determine actual funding practices, how much money is flowing to adolescent girls, where that money is flowing, or why it is being moved in precisely those ways. The amount of public data that is available also varies by funder—as some funders direct considerable resources toward communication, whereas others do not.

Recognizing that no research about girls should be done without girls, a core methodology was bringing all of these findings together with the voices of the girls themselves. To this end multiple workshops with girls aged 13-20 years who were living across four global regions were conducted. Finally, given this research is rooted in feminist funding principles, self identified feminist adolescent girls'

fundere were engaged through a survey and interactive workshops, sharpening the findings and contributing their learnings and aspirations around resourcing girls.

The concrete methodologies utilized in this research include:

- Interviews with 21 key informants
- Public data analysis of 71 actors during the period of July-December 2020
- Data infrastructure review of six data collecting entities
- Review of 50 pieces of literature
- Three workshops on data infrastructure, actors, and funding streams with nine Working Group members
- Four regional, virtual workshops with 31 adolescent girls aged 13–20 years who were living in Palestine, Yemen, Jordan, Guatemala, Brazil, Morocco, Sudan, and Sierra Leone. The geographies encompass those where members of the Working Group — Purposeful and Plan International — were providing direct grants to girls at the time of the workshops
- Two virtual workshops with 13 feminist adolescent girls funders
- Survey of feminist adolescent girls funders





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