FRIDA has organized convenings at the regional and global level since the fund formed. These have been gatherings full of resistance, celebration, exchange and solidarity. Our experiences have also meant various challenges, including safety risks, power imbalances, limited funding and short time frames to finalise logistics.

During this time we have learned from our weaknesses and vulnerabilities to better overcome challenges, fears and insecurities and therefore improve the design, planning, implementation and assessment of our convenings.

This learning process is far from over, in fact we think we will be learning and reflecting on this together always, because as we are and our context is changing, we too must be flexible enough to challenge ourselves and continue to converse and dialogue on how we do things and on the role we play.

This convening review process was an opportunity for our team to reflect on the learnings over the last 5 years and assess how we can improve our work. We are committed to continued reflecting on good practices to enable us to respond to the needs of young feminist groups and local realities.

We value feedback and input from grantee partners and attendees at the convenings as it is critical for ensuring we work more effectively. There were methodological challenges with the review process, but we feel its strength is that it has allowed us to reflect, learn, adapt and clarify some critical questions around process, content, and whether we, as a fund, should even be doing convenings at all.

We are truly committed to incorporating these reflections into our daily practices when organizing convenings, but also to a practice of transparent collective learning. This means we want to open up spaces to think with activists and funders and others that are committed to supporting feminist movements.

This document aims to guide FRIDA in how we support and respond to feminist movements now and in the future. It is particularly useful to inform our first convening following the convening review as we plan to support a convergence in the Central Eastern Europe, Caucuses, Central North Asia region and support activists with funding for networking, exchanges and other activities focused on strengthening the fabric of movements.

This reflection, focused on purpose, politics and processes — is therefore not only useful for FRIDA but hopefully those interested in funding convening spaces and other movement building initiatives.
WHY WE ORGANISE CONVENINGS

We firmly believe that convenings provide a safe space to young feminist organizers to strengthen collective power, build new alliances, increase understanding of the diverse contexts and equip young feminist leaders with the skills and capacities they identified to better advance women’s and trans’ human rights and social justice agendas. Convenings continue to be key spaces for community to connect, strategize, and spark new collaborations, consolidate existing networks and joint projects, joint struggles and shared work. They enable people to connect on a deeper level, on a long term basis.
FRIDA’S APPROACH

FRIDA uses a holistic approach in supporting young feminist groups, from providing core and flexible funding, capacity development, networking to responding to gaps in thematic strategies and regions funded. Supporting young feminist organizers to convene is a core part of our work and a critical strategy to expand, strengthen and sustain feminist and social justice movements. Our approach to convenings is driven from the five core values of the organization: Flexibility, Resources, Inclusivity, Diversity, and Action. It recognizes power dynamics and attempts to minimize any tensions by putting power relationship at the core of the table, visibilizing it and naming it. Our approach follows feminist principles, including participation, horizontally, collectivity, and transparency in all the processes and practices. Learn more about FRIDA’s Theory of Change here.

As a young feminist funder, we believe that we need to define our role very carefully. On the one hand, we must be extremely cautious not to drive the agenda in these spaces, not to dominate the control and power in spaces, and to ensure by design that young feminists themselves are defining the needs for, and the process of holding convenings. However, we are also finding that our community is continually asking FRIDA to convene, hold space and support them to connect. Given this tension, we are committing to some key principles and practices that will guide our work in supporting movements.
KEY PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR ENGAGEMENT

- **Understanding our role**: We see FRIDA’s role to support with knowledge building, flexible funds, providing space. Our role is not to dominate the space, but rather allow and enable the space to be driven by activists themselves. Spaces, particularly those that young feminist organisations have access to are so scarce, so it is critical to provide this sort of space. In practical terms this means giving up power from the very beginning, to design of the space and process, not taking up too much space in the actual room, being respectful of the power dynamics and mindful of how and when we engage. We feel the movement should direct such spaces. We should always aim to name and constructively address the power relations. We are activists individually but as FRIDA we are a funder, and we believe that funders have a different role in activist convenings, they should not be driving the agenda or dominating the space. In cases where the space is a funder / donor meeting as opposed to an activist space, the role of the funder is of course different.

- **Meaningful participation**: Value the voices of young feminist activists themselves, as they are experts of their own contexts and realities. Story processes at all stages of the creation: planning, decision-making, theme, agenda creation, partnership selection, leading workshops, co-organising, facilitating, evaluation, creation of a survey, establishing a working group made up of advisors and grantee partners or young feminist activists. This does not mean that grantee partners must organize logistics, but that they will play a critical role in the overall process of planning, implementing and assessing the convening.
• **Challenge the status quo and actively working creatively:** This means aiming to work with artists and people that work and think differently. It also means thinking of other ways to communicate and share information. Moving away from the standard plenary, from the panel discussion and from the standard formats we are so accustomed to and sadly put our brain to sleep sometimes. This means experimental communication mechanisms, physical movement and getting out of our comfort zone even it means waking up our other senses, such as touch and smell; balancing these approaches with ensuring the content identified by grantees or participants is covered.

• **Draw on existing data and experiences:** FRIDA commits to using the grantee data it collects annually and research conducted on young feminist organising to inform its convening approach and overall movement building strategy. This commitment to use existing data ensures that we continue to be responsive to needs of young feminist activists even in the allocation of our financial and human resources.

• **Commit to an activist driven process beyond the event:** Ensure that all of our energy is not spent on the physical part of the event but that any event fits inside a process that is made up of online and offline moments that have a clustered goal or pathway for change. In the 2016 LAC convening, we awarded our first ever post-convening grants, in recognition of the need to foster longer term connections between grantees beyond just the physical space, but also to support collective organising of young feminist groups across the region; contributing to the realisation of the ideas often sparked in conversations between young feminists during in person meetings.
• **Working towards more inclusivity:** Have sufficient language interpretation (of at least one language) in every convening to ensure a diversity of experiences is shared without language barriers. We recognise that this will not account for all languages represented and we strive to improve language inclusivity in future with the use of more interpreters, wherever possible.

• **Supporting in person learning and movement building opportunities:** We aim to foster movement building opportunities at the convenings. For example, we held a Latin America and Caribbean convening in November 2016 in Mexico City. Forty-two young feminists took part, including FRIDA grantee partners, board members, staff, and advisors. To ensure we were grounded in the local context, we partnered with Elige, a young feminist organization. Advisors played an important role in the entire event from the planning, the design and the evaluation of the convening. Prior to the convening, we held a one-day advisor meeting where advisors had the opportunity to better understand and connect to the work and community of FRIDA and discuss future plans and in the region.

One of the LAC Advisors shared:

“The LAC Convening successfully created a safe and secure space for young feminist organizers to promote dialogue, community and articulate common agendas across the region. Over the two-day-period of the LAC Convening, we organized different dynamics to discuss and learn about the diverse contexts, realities and activisms in the region, while fostering the exchange of strategies and experiences among groups and strengthening the alliances and connection between Latin-American young feminists. Further, we held workshops on advocacy and digital security to increase the capacities of grantee partners, and had a space for collective well-being and self-care that included self-defense and stress management sessions.”
THE DECISION
How FRIDA/we make a decision about convenings?

• The need to converge (advisors, granteees, specific context and/or momentum)
• Resources (funding, capacities, time) allow us to support the gathering
• Ask constituents in a very real way... about assumptions that convenings held by funders are needed and valuable
• Should we:
  A) Fund their convenings! Provide democratic funding, OR
  B) Organise them ourselves

THE PREPARATION
Much more than logistics

1. Participatory approach: involvement of grantee partners, advisors, staff and board in surveys, interviews, and organization committees

2. Choosing a location and dates: Grantee partners in the country, advisors in the country

3. Ways to select partners and participants: collectively identify transparent and fair way of selecting those who will attend the convening

4. Conduct a risk assessment & have a security plan, followed by regular communication with all stakeholders about risk

5. The content (themes of sessions, trainings, etc) are developed based on the identified priorities and needs of grantee partners and advisors who will be part, either in person or online, of the convening

6. Partnering with a local feminist/sister organization that can support with logistics

7. 6 months preparation as a minimum to ensure that there is sufficient time to conduct a participatory process of organizing the convening

8. Need a logistics person/additional staffing — preferably based in the country of the convening so they understand the context and security risk of the chosen location

9. Understand diversity

10. Safe translation: working with trained translators preferably recommended by other feminist organisations

11. Encourage and support continued in person and online engagement.

12. Evaluation & documentation: FRIDA, informed by the creative approach of holding convenings will use creative approaches to documents key aspects of the convening and to capture the assessment of the convening space
AT THE CONVENING

POWER DYNAMICS AND RELATIONSHIP

FACILITATIONS OF SESSIONS

SAFE SPACE

SELF-CARE TIME

TRANSLATORS AND NOTETAKER

AFTER THE GATHERING

POST-CONVENING & MOVEMENT BUILDING GRANTS

FOLLOW UP & EVALUATION
Convenings continue to be key spaces for community to connect, strategize, and spark new collaborations, consolidate existing networks and joint projects, joint struggles and shared work.

— FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund