GIRLS to the FRONT

A snapshot of girl-led organising

CREDITS

Commissioned by FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund and Mama Cash

WHO ARE WE?

Mama Cash

Mama Cash funds and supports women's, girls', trans and intersex people's rights organisations and initiatives around the globe that challenge the root causes of injustice. Mama Cash's role is to provide the money and support that will enable our grantee-partners to strengthen their organisations, build their support bases, shape their agendas and collaborate with others to build collective movements for change. Mama Cash mobilises resources from individuals and institutions, makes grants to women's, girls', trans and intersex people's organisations, and helps build partnerships and networks to successfully defend and advance women's, girls', trans and intersex rights globally.

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund is the only youth-led fund focused exclusively on supporting global young feminist activism to advance social justice movements and agendas. FRIDA envisions a world where young women, girls, trans and intersex youth are recognised as experts of their own reality, enjoying their human rights and building a more just and sustainable world through collective power and transformative leadership. FRIDA provides accessible and strategic funding for newly established young feminist-led initiatives through a participatory grant-making process. It aims to strengthen their capacity to leverage additional resources, enhance their impact, increase commitments from donors and allies, and build partnerships to resource young feminist activism.

IWORDS Global

IWORDS Global is a UK-based social entrepreneurship with a presence in the United Kingdom, Spain, Colombia and Nepal, with expertise on providing research and technical support services in the fields of human rights, gender rights, youth and children, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health rights. We help our clients with strategic planning, specialised translations, fundraising, report and proposal writing, e-content development and design creation. We have supported many international, regional and local organisations in over 120 countries across Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East.

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KEY CONCEPTS

Girl-led: Girls make the decisions on all issues relating to their group/organisation. They design their own plans/strategies, set their own priorities and decide how the budget is spent/used, etc. They may or may not have the support of adults. Adult allies might also provide information and assist girls during their processes.

Girl-centred: 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.[1]

Intersectionality: Intersectionality refers to how different forms of oppression overlap and interact. These forms can include, but are not limited to, gender, sexual identity and orientation, race, religion, ability and class. In practice, intersectionality calls for a recognition of the varying backgrounds, perspectives and needs of women and girls from all walks of life and to accept that a singular understanding of feminism will never be sufficient. Gendered discrimination, like women and girls themselves, is multidimensional.[2]

WE CAN DO IT!

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1. Let Girls Lead, *LGL guide TO GIRL- CENTERED ADVOCACY*, Available at: https://www.riseuptogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/LGL_Curriculum_FINAL.pdf
2. This definition is adapted from K. Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of anti-discrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', University of Chicago Legal Forum 140, 1989, pp. 139-167.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's tough being a girl. All over the world, girls face multiple layers of discrimination: for being female, for being young and for the other multiple identities that define them, such as race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity. In the face of these challenges, girls worldwide are organising and joining forces to have their agency and autonomy recognised, respected and celebrated. Who better to know what girls need than girls themselves?

Girls and their organisations and/or initiatives are important to social movements. Mama Cash and FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund, two women's funds long committed to supporting girls and their organising, decided to commission a research study to find out more about how girls are organising across the world. This participatory, feminist, intersectional research placed girls at the centre, making them partners of the study. The participation of Girl Advisors— activists who hail from five different countries and have diverse backgrounds, profiles and skills-- brought invaluable input to the table.

The research used in-depth interviews and an online questionnaire, as well as an exhaustive desk review to collect data from girl-led groups and organisations, girl-centred organisations and the stakeholders that support them at different levels. This is an exciting opportunity to spotlight how girl-led organising takes place and how funders can provide flexible support that responds to the needs of girls and their organising.

Below are some of the main findings of the research study.

The characteristics of girls' organising

Girls everywhere are organising. Initiatives and organisations led by girls 18 and under are usually unregistered and less formally established than traditional adult-led groups. One of the main findings from this research study was that girls are finding creative and innovative ways to organise that allow them to circumvent the many barriers they face in coming together. They have shown themselves to be big fans of social networks, with technology playing a central role in the way they organise. But despite making extensive use of it, lack of access is a barrier for girls to make more and better use of new technologies.

Girls are inspired by each other and by their past involvement in civil society. Some decide to start their own, independent initiatives, but many more decide to launch their initiatives within already existing organisations. This grants them access to technical assistance, financial resources, meeting spaces and networking opportunities with other like-minded groups. The girl-led groups and initiatives that are born and operate within more established organisations usually have a high degree of programmatic autonomy though rarely have full control over financial management.

The mere existence of these girl-led groups in the face of a myriad of barriers and challenges is in itself a great success. However, there are many ways in which girls define and assess their success, and these don't always coincide with traditional, adult-centred definitions of success.

Not all girl-led groups want to be registered or formalised. Although funding to informal groups is increasingly available throughout the world, registration is still a requirement for the majority of donors. Girls recognise that formalising their initiatives would give them more access to a wider range of sources of funding and support. While for some this may be the goal, others choose not to register. Some do not feel ready to take on the legal and financial responsibilities of registration while others believe registration would restrict their work. In some cases, there is a legal minimum age requirement for registration, thus excluding girls who may want to register but are too young.

The barriers to girls' organising

Stereotypes about adolescents as a barrier to girls' organising. The majority of girls approached as part of this study felt they were not taken seriously in their work and activism by adults. Girls are particularly concerned and hurt by the fact that their work does not seem to be taken seriously by older feminists.

The closing space for civil society heavily affects girl activists and their initiatives. Multiple studies have shown that formal and informal state interventions to control civil society have a disproportionate impact on the political voice of women and trans people. This phenomenon extends to girl activists and girl-led groups and organisations, adding age as yet another cross-cutting axis of oppression for girls.

Recommendations to support girl-led initiatives

It is crucial to support girls in a non-ageist and non-sexist way that respects them and recognises the importance of their experience and their work. To do so requires recognising sexism and ageism faced by girls and valuing their struggles and experiences as much as those of adults. Girls must continue to be offered opportunities and support initiatives that enhance mutual learning and experience sharing. Likewise, funders must continue to provide flexible and responsive funding to unregistered, grassroots girl-led groups. When involving girls in initiatives, there must be recognition of their time, effort and expertise and they should be compensated accordingly in the way most beneficial to them, whether that is monetarily and/or through training, mentorship or internship programmes.

Financial support is key but NOT the only need of girl-led groups. Although financial support is one of the most significant needs of girl-led groups, girls all over the world also need and want other forms of support such as technical assistance, networking opportunities and the ability to interact with peers.

IN THIS ADVERSE SOCIETY, IS THERE ANYTHING HARDER THAN BEING A WOMAN?

BEING A GIRL.

INTRODUCTION
Girls' organising

Why does it matter?

The traditionally held view about the young is that they are naïve, incapable or incomplete. Adultism, a bias towards adults, and consequently, discrimination against young people, is deeply ingrained in society and, unfortunately, also extends into civil society organisations and movements. For girls, it is worse. They face a double burden of prejudice: for being young and for being female.

Despite the discrimination, girls are pushing back through their activism. Around the world, girls' organising has proven time and again that they are anything but incapable or incomplete. In fact, they are informed and engaged citizens who are opening up new spaces of expression and action with new ideas and fresh perspectives. **Girls are showing that they are the *present* of social movements, not just the future.** The issues that affect girls are no less serious than those affecting adults, so why should their voices carry less weight or their work be any less visible?

Like their older counterparts, girl activists are powerful catalysts for change within their communities and in society. In Mexico, girls are pushing for sustainable development in line with UN goals. Guatemalan girls are educating other girls, as well as women and men, on feminism via community radio, and creating a culture of citizen journalism along the way. In Mongolia, girls conduct policy advocacy focused on promoting girl-friendly policies. In Uganda, girls have brought freedom to other girls and women by teaching them how to make reusable, safe sanitary pads using local materials.

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Girl activists are reshaping organisational structures, resisting what they see as adult driven hierarchical models and favouring more horizontal and inclusive decision-making processes. Some groups interviewed for this research showed a strong commitment to leadership transition. For example, a group in Bolivia that is adolescent-led employs a policy where adolescents lead the organisation only from the age of 18 to 19. A child club in Nepal has a similar leadership strategy. Upon graduating from the club after the age of 18 and until they are 20, members are eligible to become facilitators and provide leadership and guidance to current members. An organisation in Uganda meanwhile, does not ask members to leave upon reaching 18 but in an attempt to remain youth-led, leaders give up their position when they come of age, giving young members the opportunity to exercise leadership. These examples are a formidable statement on the value of giving up power for the greater good.

Although there is much overlap in the issues that girls and adults are fighting for, girls bring new perspectives. The work they do and the ways in which they organise can provide important learning opportunities to many other organisations, if girls are given the space to organise with support and respect. The healthy evolution of the feminist movement only stands to gain by including the voices of its youngest members.

Why now?

Girls' importance in social change is gradually being recognised; however, this is not reflected in the share of international funding they receive. There is little data on how much funding girls do receive, but the World Bank highlights the deficiency in a 2012 report, which states that "less than two cents of every dollar spent on international aid is specifically directed towards adolescent girls." There is even less data on how much of this aid trickles down to initiatives led by girls themselves. Data from 2014 indicates that young feminist organisations had a low median income of $5,000 USD per year, and groups led by girls receive significantly less funding than those led by young women.[3]

Despite the challenges, girls around the world are organising and joining forces to have their agency and autonomy recognised, respected and celebrated. The ways in which they measure their success are as diverse as the groups themselves, but considering all the barriers and resistance they encounter in organising, the mere act of coming together is in itself a success.

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3. FRIDA and AWID, *Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organising*, (2014).
4. Based on interviews with representatives from organisations that were part of these different initiatives, (With and for Girls Collective, Community of Practice led by Mama Cash and Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, and Grassroots Girls Solution), including Stars Foundation, who manages the With and For Girls Award. Although the focus of these initiatives was supporting girl-led initiatives and groups, participants felt that the core of the work actually advanced girl-centred instead of girl-led work.

Mama Cash and FRIDA have long been committed to supporting girls' organising and in recent years, both funds have led and participated in initiatives that support girls' leadership and agency. Experiences such as the Grassroots Girls Initiative, the Community of Practice of women's funds supporting girls' and young women's groups, and the With and For Girls Collective, have shown that, while finding and funding girl-led organisations remains challenging, enormous strides have been made in this regard.[4]

This research was aimed at **gaining a better understanding of girl-led organising, focusing on girls as leaders and girl-led groups that operate with little or no adult intervention.** The purpose was to know: Who are these girls? How and where are they organising? What motivates them? How can they be reached and best supported? To start answering these questions, a study was commissioned applying a participatory, feminist, intersectional approach. This research was an exciting opportunity to show **how funders can provide flexible support that responds to the needs of girls and their organising.** It also paved the way for the effort to begin mapping girl-led initiatives around the world.

THE STUDY

Based in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa, the dynamic intergenerational research team for this study was composed of the IWORDS Global research team and involved a team of Girl Advisors – girl activists with experience working with girls and youth in their communities.

The process was highly inclusive, involving girls in all steps and activities, including the development and implementation of data collection tools, the selection of case studies, and the selection of the population to be engaged. Their full participation in the research study was critical and sought to ensure girls' voices, points of views and perspectives were the driving force behind the research from the beginning.

Methodology[5]

This research study used several methodologies to collect data and information and a triangulation process as the basis for the findings and recommendations. It engaged girl-led grassroots groups, stakeholders and youth or girl-centred organisations that support girls and their initiatives, girl leaders and former girl leaders.[6]

Data was collected via:

- An extensive desk review prioritising documents published by development and humanitarian organisations with a commitment to gender equality and girls' leadership and agency

- 60 Online questionnaires via Survey Monkey in five languages to girl-led and girl-centred organisations (53 girl-centred organisations, 7 girl-led organisations)

- 28 Online questionnaires via Survey Monkey to stakeholders in English

- 30 In-depth interviews with organisations and individuals who support girl-led groups or whose work is focused on girls

- 24 Interviews with former and current girl-led groups and organisations

- 3 Interviews with government entities focusing on girls

- 48 In-depth interviews with girl-centred organisations within which girl-led groups operate

- 10 In-depth interviews with current and former girl-leaders and activists

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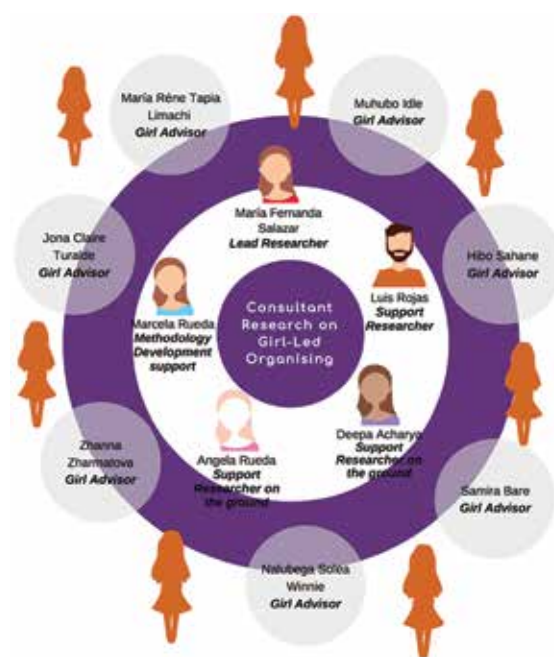
5. For more information on the methodology of the research consult **Annex 1: Methodology**
6. In total 430 groups and organisations were mapped as part of the study, 188 of them did not respond at all to requests for participation

Scope

The study sought to be as global as possible, making a conscious and solid effort to include girls from all over the world. However, in line with the regional priorities of Mama Cash and FRIDA, the regions prioritised were:[7] (1) Africa and West Asia, (2) East, South and Southeast Asia and Oceania, (3) Europe, Central and North Asia, (4) Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional and local stakeholders from these four regions were also consulted as part of the study as well as international stakeholders often located in the USA and Canada.

Limitations

Online nature of the study means some groups were left out. The research was implemented primarily online, and the team feels confident that the work conducted was successful in shedding light on girl-led organising around the world. However, many groups and organisations, in particular those that are small, rural and informal, may not have access to online resources or even stable access to a mobile signal. As a result, girls and organisations with some degree of privilege and access to technology and higher education are overrepresented in the study.

Hello – Hola – Salut: challenges of translation. In-depth interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Russian, Nepali, Portuguese and Kyrgyz. When no common language existed between interviewer and interviewee, interview guides were translated into additional languages such as French using free online resources and sent to the organisations to be completed in writing. While this helped more organisations participate, it was clear that it was no replacement for an in-depth interview.

Dealing with busy schedules. It was difficult for small groups, which are often volunteer-led and have limited time and resources, to engage in initiatives such as this one.

The fact that girl activists were vital members of the team also meant that research coordinators had to be flexible to ensure the maximum level of engagement, including organising the work schedule to fit around the girls' time or their schoolwork. Researchers also needed to identify the most appropriate technologies to use and how to reach those with little access to technology.

It also took significant effort to get international stakeholders to participate in the study given their competing priorities.

The younger the girls, the harder they are to reach. Young girls are not readily accessible either because of legislation meant to protect them or because of the constraints of patriarchal norms which can limit their mobility and independence. They are often absent from public spaces and the younger they are, the more difficult it is to reach them.

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7.   Mama Cash, *What's in a name?* Available at: https://www.mamacash.org/en/what-s-in-a-name

The characteristics of Girls' organising

Girls are defined by more than just their age

In conducting this research study, one of the main issues was identifying the age range to focus on. The reason 18 was established as the upper limit for the study responds to the concern that there is very little research done on this age group. Of course, 18 is when adulthood is legally recognised worldwide, and it usually grants young women new levels of autonomy. However, what girlhood means varies from culture to culture regardless of what development studies, international legislation or the philanthropic community might say.

In some communities, such as some Indigenous groups in Central America, youth barely exists as people go from early childhood to adulthood very quickly. In some Asian countries youth may last until the late 30s: reverence and obedience toward elders is a staple of society, which leads to young people lacking agency until very late in life.[8] It is clear that what it means to be a 17-year-old in Guatemala can vary significantly to what it means in Kenya, Nepal or Germany. In many ways, age, as an adult-centred way of measuring girlhood, can be quite arbitrary in determining the experience of girls.

What truly makes a difference for girls is their life experiences and particular circumstances such as education level, employment status, poverty situation, membership in a specific marginalised or stigmatised group, or marital status. Most of the groups that participated in this study reported that marriage was for many a major constraint. They said that married members of groups were no longer able to participate either due to time constraints or because they faced opposition from their husbands.

On the other hand, in conversations with girls and in the data collected, it was found that many girls under 18 who founded groups and organisations were already in higher education, which provides more freedom and allows for a period of self-discovery in which girls have the possibility to organise. These initiatives showed much more agency, autonomy and independence than those founded by girls still attending secondary school.

There are certainly other, less traditional centres of activism, for girls and youth who do not have access to higher education, but these are usually less visible and/or sometimes labelled negatively and relegated to the margins of society because they are deemed to present a threat to the establishment. For example, disenfranchised, out-of-school youth who come together are often branded hooligans and gang members, unlike their counterparts who come together within established institutions.

Girls that participated in this study were identified and contacted online and have some level of access to technology. Thus, it must be noted that in most cases they have some degree of privilege, and there could be a correlation with their access to education, in particular university level.

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8. Based on interviews with women's funds and organisations supporting girls in Asia

Girls everywhere are organising!

Groups and organisations led by girls 18 and under exist throughout the world, and this research found them primarily in Latin America, North America and Western Europe.[9] Based on the mapping carried out as part of this study,[10] **initiatives and organisations led by girls 18 and under are usually unregistered and less formally established than traditional adult-led groups.**

As completely independent, stand-alone organisations, girl-led initiatives are small in number. This study was able to identify fewer than twenty. As this research study was conducted primarily online, girl-led groups with little or no online presence were difficult to reach. This low number is by no means exhaustive and this research does not claim to have reached or even identified all girl-led groups currently existing.

Girls know what they and their communities want and need; however, they often do not have the resources necessary to lead their initiatives without support. Many girls have found the best – or sometimes only – way for them to organise is by working with or within already established organisations that are adult-led or youth-led.

There are several reasons why girl-led groups operate within or in association with others, including the following:

a. Money and staff are an issue!

Setting up an independent, formal organisation can be expensive. It is particularly challenging for organisations with low annual budgets. Survey findings show that 33% of organisations in Africa, West Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean; 25% of organisations in East, South & Southeast Asia and Oceania; and 17% of organisations in Europe, Central and North Asia operate on less than $10,000 USD a year.

Figure 1: Reasons why unregistered girl-led groups and organisations choose not to register

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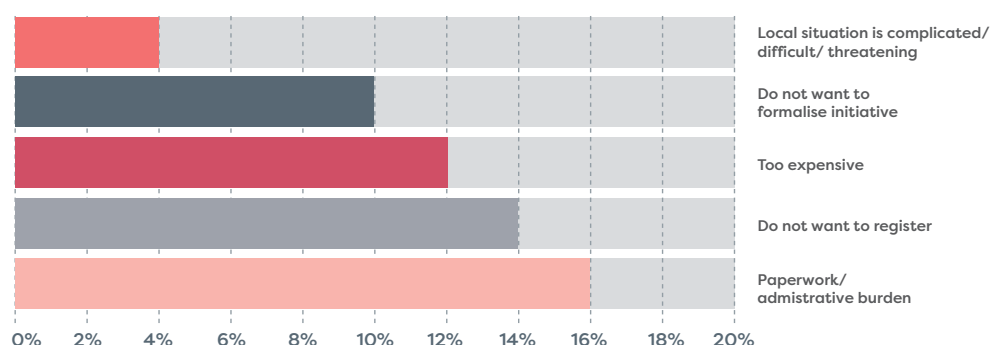
9.   As this research was conducted primarily online, it was easier to identify and reach girl-led groups and initiatives by girls in regions with more internet accessibility. In Latin America, some groups with no access to the internet were referred by other groups or funds.

10. Although the main purpose of this study was not to conduct an extensive mapping of girl-led groups and organisations around the world, however as part of the process, a cascade mapping was conducted to identify girl-led groups and organisations to involve in the different methodologies in the study.

b. Papers, papers and more papers

Registration is most often a primary requirement for securing funding. Although the process of registration varies from country to country (and sometimes even within countries), it invariably carries legal and financial implications. In many countries, registration is not available for legal minors so groups are forced to wait until at least one of the members turns 18 before they can begin registration.

Also, registration processes are often complicated, expensive, and require organisations to establish legal representation, to have financial systems in place and to have hired full-time staff. With no money for staff and no permanent physical address of their own, many girls find themselves ineligible for registration.

c. Working with who you know

Some girls' initiatives are born from the girls' previous involvement as beneficiaries in larger, more established organisations, where they would have been encouraged and supported to lead their own activities, initiatives or groups. In some cases, girls choose to eventually become independent, but more often, they remain part of the organisation. **It is important to note that these girl-led groups and initiatives that are born and operate within more established organisations usually have a high degree of programmatic autonomy, though they rarely have full control over financial management.**

Regions					
Reasons to start the initiative (survey: more than one answer was possible) N=56	Africa and West Asia	East, South & Southeast and Oceania	Europe, Central and North Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	US and Canada
Personal incident motivated to act against injustices	88%	50%	33%	36%	0%
Community incident motivated to act against injustices	63%	25%	50%	61%	20%
Country incident motivated to act against injustices	25%	25%	33%	53%	20%
Encouraged by an adult	13%	0%	0%	11%	0%
Inspired by other girl-led initiatives	25%	0%	50%	36%	0%
Needed a safe place	25%	0%	17%	25%	0%
Seeking a group of others like me	38%	0%	0%	25%	0%
No other groups for participation	25%	0%	33%	28%	0%
Adults group did not take seriously	0%	0%	0%	28%	0%
Others (We wanted to be the ones to change our communities, The association was established for the service of women and girls in reproductive and sexual health)	25%	0%	17%	14%	0%

Case Study: GirlPowa Belize

The group was founded in 2011 as a girl club within POWA, an organisation that seeks to build the capacity of girls and women and engage the community in bringing an end to violence against children. GirlPowa was created by girls that were already part of POWA and is autonomous and entirely led by the girls but receives technical and financial support. Thandiwe Diego, its founder who is now 18 years old, says the group has no plans to become an independent organisation, as there is no need for it. Members feel they have the desired autonomy over their work and they welcome the support of POWA. The added benefit is that as girls get older, they can transition into POWA without leaving their activism behind, and GirlPowa remains girl-led.

Girls do not always organise as adults would, nor do they want to

Girls and their initiatives respond to the particularities of their age, time and circumstances, and their initiatives and projects reflect this. **For many, the initiatives they undertake, while hugely important, are not the centre of their lives.** They are one of many activities and projects they are juggling. In these cases, while some initiatives do eventually become formalised and may even provide livelihoods for their founders, many prefer to remain informal.

A crucial difference girls have identified in girl-led organisations versus adult-led ones has to do with structure and decision-making. Based on interviews for this study and survey findings, **initiatives led by girls are usually horizontal in structure with extremely democratic organisational models in which all members are equally valued and consulted.** For some, such a model is a conscious rejection of how they perceive traditional adult-centred organisations which are top-down and hierarchical.

Finally, **while girl-led groups and initiatives certainly have goals and objectives that focus on some form of social transformation in their community, for many, the personal growth aspect of the process is just as important.** Some groups provide a support system that offers girls a safe space where they can be themselves, explore their identities and their place in the world, free of traditional patriarchal impositions. Sometimes this is just as important a focus as social change. For such groups, a hierarchical structure does not fit their purposes.

Not all girl-led groups want to be registered or formalised

Today, the number of funders and organisations that provide support to non-traditional civil society actors, such as unregistered groups and organisations, is growing. In the case of girl-led organisations, such support comes primarily from women's funds.[11] **However, it is still the case that most funders, in particular those associated with the development sector, require that the organisations they support be legally registered.**

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11.   Mama Cash, Holden, Lydia, *New Perspectives, New Solutions: Funding Organising Led by Girls and Young Women*, (2012).

In recent years, social and political movements around the world have encountered huge obstacles and risks, including seeing their work criminalised, due to a general surge of unfriendly policies such as restrictions on funding, freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of movement. Some girls are apprehensive about taking on the legal and financial responsibilities associated with formalising a group because of the possible consequences.

Girl-led groups and initiatives recognise that registration is key to unlocking funding. Still, **many groups remain unregistered for long periods of time, some even permanently.** For some, it is a conscious decision driven by the the group's guiding principles; for others, independence brings no added benefits (as in the case of GirlPowa above).

The cost of registering an organisation varies greatly from country to country as well as regionally. In some cases, discounts are given to friends of a governing party.

Below are examples of how much registration can cost based on public data and information gathered.

Nepal: 150 USD

Kenya: 170 USD for national NGO, 310 USD for International NGO

UAE: No fee

Thailand: 6,230 USD

Switzerland: 50,250 USD (minimum starting capital for non-profits operating nationally or internationally)

USA: starting at 300 USD

Spain: starting at 40 USD

Guatemala: starting at 1,500 USD

Although being unregistered can be a barrier to funding, girls have found ways around this

Many girl-led groups, for whom registration is not a viable or desirable option, have found alternatives. In some cases, girls already operate within established organisations; in others, they associate with other more established organisations that already have legal registration and are willing to administer the funds as fiscal agents or sponsors.[12] The sponsoring organisation retains control and discretion over the funds and asks for records and reports to fulfil its oversight responsibilities.[13] While this strategy, which is widely adopted by girls, allows them to have access to funding, it makes them financially dependent on other entities. This motivates some to eventually register to ensure their financial autonomy.

For some who do want to formalise, they may choose **to register their groups as community-based organisations instead of non-governmental organisations,** because in some countries, CBOs receive some type of governmental support.

12. From Trust for Conservation Innovation, *Fiscal Sponsorship: a 360 Degree Perspective,* (2014).
13. National Council of Nonprofits, *Fiscal Sponsorship, who does what?* Infographic. Available at: https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/images/fiscal-sponsorship-infographic.png

Case Study: AMA Guatemala

When Agrupación Mujeres Activas (AMA) was founded, it was able to secure seed capital from Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) without having to register given that FCAM funds unregistered groups. However, as it grew and expanded its work, it became clear that without registering there were limits to the funding it was able to obtain. AMA was interested in receiving funds from the Central American and Mexico Youth Fund (CAMY) but this required registration. That's when AMA reached out to Global Humanitaria, a Spanish INGO with local offices in Guatemala with whom it had collaborated in the past. Global Humanitaria was familiar with AMA's work and believed in its members and agreed to serve as fiscal agent. In this way AMA was able to secure funds from CAMY and other donors that required registration. With time however, AMA eventually decided to register legally to have more autonomy and greater control over its own financial resources.

As girls grow older, their groups may become girl-centred instead of girl-led

As girls grow and evolve, naturally so do their initiatives and organisations. Often in the beginning, girl-led groups are maintained almost exclusively by the girls themselves who come up with different ways to keep their initiatives afloat such as mobilising resources from their communities, charging membership fees or selling products made by members.

When girls become older, there are several trajectories their girl-led groups can take. Sometimes, the founders remain in charge and the group evolves into a girl-centred but adult-led organisation. In some cases, as they age, organisations establish girl groups or youth programmes to maintain their original focus and character. Others insist on maintaining the original girl-led spirit of the group and commit to handing over the leadership to a younger generation.

Culture, tradition and politics: what drives and/or prevents girls from taking action?

Girls, like the rest of us, are heavily conditioned by the societies, communities and families they live in. They are moved to action by what happens around them. Globally, over 50% of organisations polled in this study were created because of a community incident that moved the girls to act against an injustice, while 38% were driven to organising by a personal incident.

Some issues are specific to certain regions or cultures. For example, female genital cutting moves a great number of girls in Africa and West Asia, but it is not a priority for girls in Latin America where only a few Indigenous communities engage in the practice. While early marriage is a global issue,[14] it is most common in Africa and Asia. Meanwhile the most common issues that mobilise girls worldwide are gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and access to education.

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14. Worldwide 1 in 5 girls are married before 18. The sub-regions regions with the highest percentage of early marriage are South Asia and West, Central, East and Southern Africa where 45% and 38% of girls respectively marry by 18. Latin America and the Caribbean fall closely behind with 23% (countries such as the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Nicaragua, Guatemala have percentages comparable to those of the average for Sub-Saharan Africa) of girls marrying by 18, but the issue has not yet gained as much attention in the region either from girl-led groups or funders as in Africa and Asia. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/

Success is in the eye of the beholder

The ways in which girls measure their success are as diverse as the groups themselves and do not always correspond to **adult-centred or donor expectations**. The fact is that girls' work responds to their unique and valuable experiences, and so does the way in which they evaluate it.

The majority of the girls who participated in our study measure the success of their group on being recognised as experts in their respective fields, by the impact they have on the communities with which they work (whether they rigorously measure that impact or not), and by the empowerment of the girls that they work with (how they define and measure that impact varies).

"We are successful because despite racism, sexism, lesbian and trans antagonism and other systems of oppression, we decided to organise ourselves as a group to combat them."

"Success is the fact that we exist as a collective in our municipality, doing advocacy in favour of female empowerment."

"Success is that we are recognised as experts in sexuality education by the media, other organisations and institutions."

QUOTES FROM Girl-led groups that participated in the online survey

Sometimes, boys participate too

The level of boys' participation in organisations led by girls varies greatly, ranging from total exclusion to full involvement, including in decision-making. On the one hand, groups that choose not to involve boys argue that they want to create safe spaces for girls, and the presence of boys challenges that. On the other hand, there are groups and organisations that have opened the possibility for boys' participation because they feel they play a key role in the defence of women's rights and gender equality. Some others work on issues that do not affect girls exclusively, such as environmental protection or the defence of LGBTQI rights, and thus they are open to the participation and involvement of boys. Based on the survey, 61% of the organisations said boys were involved in their initiatives. That participation was considered to be useful by 55% of the organisations. **The study found that, often, girls sought to ensure girl-leadership of their group, and, as such, boys did not have decision-making roles.**

Technology plays a central role in the way girls organise

The use of technology — both new technologies such as social networks as well as more traditional ones such as community radio — is crucial to girls and their organisations. How girls use technology in their initiatives depends on the context. Though high-speed internet and smart mobile devices are more widely available than ever before, they are by no means universally available, and they are certainly not accessible and affordable to all. For example, in the United Arab Emirates, 80% of the population uses smartphones, whereas it is only 5.2% in Bangladesh.[15]

In 2017, 26% of the world's population had a Facebook account. Regional differences are large and while in North America over 72% of the population had access to the Facebook, in Latin America the percentage was 57%. While Asia and Africa show the smallest Facebook penetration with 18% and 13% of the population having access respectively, they do show the greatest increase in the past years. Since 2010, Facebook subscribers have increased by 810% in Africa and 686% in Asia.

Internet World Stats

Girls and their initiatives the world over are making use of this resource to organise as well as to carry out their work. The majority of them reported using smartphones to communicate both with other members of the group and with beneficiaries.

Our research found that girls are **big fans of social networks.** They use services such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as part of their work, mostly to increase visibility of their work, to promote events and activities, and to invite community members to become involved. **They are are also fans of WhatsApp** (in Asia, LINE is more popular). They use the messaging app to coordinate their work and to communicate on a daily basis. In fact, the majority of interviews with girl-led groups conducted as part of this research were done over WhatsApp as it is much more widely used than Skype or other messaging services.

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15. Newzoo's Global Mobile Market Report, (*April 2017*).

Research shows that **70% of the world's youth are online***. Access to the internet is greatly impacted by where you find yourself in the world. The proportion of young people aged 15-24 who use the internet per region is as follows:

Europe 96%	The Americas 88%	Asia and the Pacific 72%	Arab States 64%	Africa 40%

There are over **2.4 billion** radio receivers and over **51,000** radio stations worldwide

The top three tools/applications used by survey respondents are

| Social Networks 85%	Mobile Phones 78%	WhatsApp 76%

In Africa and West Asia, video tools, software and cameras are used by **67%**	Radio, although not as popular globally (40%), is still widely used in Latin America at **60%**

Out of the 428 groups and organisations that were involved in this study, **339 or 70%** of them have an institutional Facebook page.

*ITU World Telecommunication, 2017; UNESCO, 2013
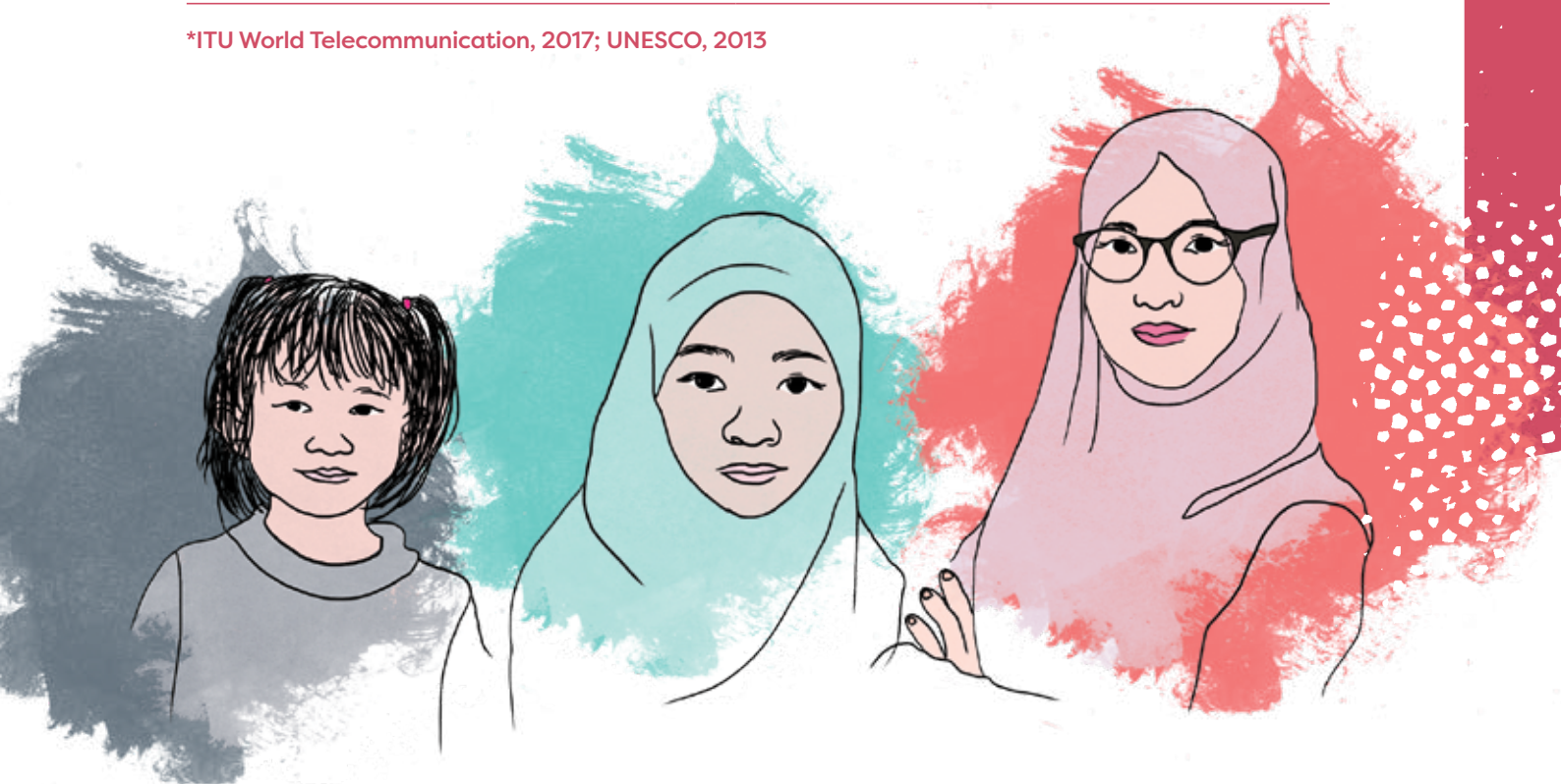
Case Study: The use of Facebook

Juventudes Literarias is an organisation that provides space for cultural and literary activities for young people. The founder, a girl from Cúcuta, Colombia, started the organisation when she was only 15 years old, by meeting in the city's library. She used Facebook to invite classmates to meetings in the city's library and to share information, photos and videos about the work of the group. Young people from other cities saw this content and created new chapters in four cities (Bogotá, Ibague, Pamplona and Arauca). All the interactions of the founder with the coordinators in other cities is through Facebook.

Among the organisations that participated in the online survey, 82% said they used the internet for their work. Of those who do not use the internet, 62% said this was due to its high cost; 25% said internet was not available in their region and 12.5% said while they do have internet, the connection is very bad given that they are in a rural area. Girls use the internet to connect with other groups, to promote their work, to find new opportunities for funding, to arrange meetings with group members, and to learn what other groups are doing. Only a few reported using the internet for crowdfunding or raising money.

In reaching the broader community that surrounds them, girls use other, more traditional forms of technology, such as community radio. In many areas of the world, radios are still the primary means of information sharing, and girls certainly know this and are making use of it.

None of these technological tools are mutually exclusive, and girls move smoothly among them, adopting whichever best fits their capacity and the needs of their target population.

Other forms of technology such as videos and other media tools are also being used by girls, but they are not as readily available to most. Also, girls reported that even when they have access to these technologies, they often lack the technical expertise to be able to truly make the most of them. Web pages are also not very common for girl-led groups, most preferring to use Facebook.

Case Study: Girls using radio

Asomujerdi is a girl-led organisation in Guatemala that uses community radio to broadcast messages that challenge traditional roles of women in society. Through radio programmes such as the Feminist Hour, it provides information to girls regarding their rights and responsibilities. The organisation faced some barriers in starting up, such as obtaining parental permission or being perceived as competition by commercial radio stations. Nonetheless, it hopes to keep engaging more girls to participate and wants to expand to television.

The main barriers to Girls' organising

Disempowering discourses and stereotypes about adolescents as a barrier to organising

Two prominent discourses of adolescence – the coming of age story, and developmental arguments of adolescence as a time of "becoming" – serve to define young people as incapable, partial and deficient in contrast to the imagined vision of an adult: capable, complete and rational. These discourses contribute to marginalising and disempowering young people and adolescents, dismissing their experiences in the present by focusing mainly on their status as adults-in-training.[16] If adults do not recognise the voices of children and adolescents not only as valid but as crucial, it is increasingly difficult for adolescents and especially girls to actively participate in their communities safely and positively.[17]

The majority of girls spoken to felt that they were not taken seriously in their work and activism and often felt patronised by the adults in their lives. The girls felt that unfortunately, this ageism extended to other social activists, including older feminists who often treat them as if their experiences, contributions and activism are not as valid as their own. Some even reported cases of tension between older and younger feminists.

According to the research, although older feminists encourage the girls and tell them they are doing a good job, they never actually attend any of their events citing busy schedules, despite the girls inviting them repeatedly. Girls found this extremely discouraging and disrespectful. **They say that of all the forms of discrimination they face, the one they experience from fellow activists and other feminists due to their age is the most stinging.**

> **In the beginning, we faced rejection, because we were young. Parents were not sure what we were doing with their daughters; they thought we were misleading them. The community was also not convinced with our work, many people said what could young girls teach to a fellow girl.**
>
> Hands of Hope Initiative, Uganda

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16. NY: New York University Press, *Taft, J. Rebel girls: Youth activism and social change across the Americas. New York*, (2011).
17. Save the Children, *Adolescent and youth participation and civic engagement in the Mena Region from the Translating Research Into Scaled Up Action: Evidence Symposium on Adolescent and Youth in MENA*, (November 2017).

Case Study: Intergenerational dialogues

The tension between older and younger feminists inspired women's funds such as the Women's Fund Georgia, Ukrainian Women's Fund and Filia to promote and fund intergenerational dialogues that may serve to establish a more open line of communication between younger and older feminists. In one case, girls shared that it was challenging to get some women's organisations at the table, while for those that did join these dialogues shifted their understanding of the position and role of girls in organising efforts.

The idea that young people have unlimited energy is a myth, and can be harmful. Some of the girls interviewed said that their adult colleagues assumed that because they were young, they had an inexhaustible source of energy. Worker burnout has long been recognised in the private, development and humanitarian sectors as well as for volunteers who too often experience burnout as a result of their involvement with civil society organisations. This is a serious issue that organisations need to be aware of and address if they want to value and protect their staff and volunteers.[18]

However, when dealing with young people, adult-led organisations and funders often assume that because of their youth they cannot face burnout. This results in adults not taking young people seriously when they show signs of burnout or even when they express it out loud. This can discourage girls from raising concerns about their mental health, from participating in civil society organisations and can even lead to them abandoning their activism.[19]

Restricted agency and mobility

Patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a girl are present over the world and girls' agency and mobility are highly controlled in many communities. Early marriage and maternity, lack of access to education, conservative stereotypes of what it means to be female and restrictions of movement make it difficult for girls to mobilise. For example, based on research[20] in West Asia, adolescent girls, particularly between the ages of 14-19 are highly controlled and absent from the public sphere because the onset of puberty makes entire families very protective of their girls, with gatekeepers often being their male siblings more so than parents.

18. Chacon Fuentes, *Fernando and María Luisa Vecina Jiménez, Motivation and Burnout in Volunteerism, Colegio Oficial de Psicólogos, Spain*, (2000).
19. Political Studies Association, *Feminism: A fourth wave?* Available at: https://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/feminism-fourth-wave, The Guardian Women awards, The fourth wave of feminism: meet the rebel women. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women, and Chamberlain Prudence, The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality. Palgrave Macmillan, (2017). doi:10.1007/978-3-319-53682-8. ISBN 978-3-319-53682-8.
20. The Cash Consortium, *Definition of Gatekeepers, People or structures that control access to something, such as information or services*"

The closing space for civil society heavily affects girl activists and their initiatives

The closing space for civil society is a widespread phenomenon, and according to the CIVICUS Monitor, more than 3.2 billion people live in countries in which "civic space" is either closed or repressed. It also states that only 16 countries out of 134 – for which there is verified data – are genuinely open. This demonstrates that the phenomenon goes far beyond states that CIVICUS has identified as autocratic, such as Russia and Egypt, but has spread to states that CIVICUS has identified as democratic including India, Canada, Hungary, Mexico and the UK.[21]

From 2012 to 2015, more than 100 laws were proposed or enacted by governments aimed at restricting the registration, operation, and funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all over the world.[22] Research conducted has found that formal and informal state interventions to control civil society have a disproportionate impact on the political voice of women and trans people.[23] This phenomenon extends to girl activists and girl-led groups and organisations, adding age as yet another cross-cutting axis of oppression for girls.

This study found that in Latin America, girls often face more barriers from authorities than from their immediate communities. The shrinking space for civil society coupled with widespread clientelism[24] make it difficult for girls to organise around issues that are seen as contrary to the agenda of governing parties (local or national).

In some countries, like El Salvador, girls said that registration is facilitated for organisations and groups aligned with the governing regime but are obstructed for organisations that either do not support it or advocate for issues contrary to its agenda. Also, as a result of El Salvador's Ley Lepina (Law of Comprehensive Protection of Childhood and Adolescence) passed in 2012, all youth under 18 need signed permission from their parents to participate in any activity, seriously limiting their ability to organise.

In Guatemala, it is unlikely that a group will be granted registration if it is not aligned with the political party in power. In Poland, now that there is a far-right government in power, organisations (including girl-led initiatives) that work on

21. OpenGlobalRights: *Under threat: five countries in which civic space is rapidly closing.* Available at: https://www.openglobalrights.org/under-threat-five-countries-in-which-civic-space-is-rapi/

22. Ariadne, *Challenging the Closing Space for Civil Society, A practical starting point for funders*, (2015). Available at: http://www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Ariadne_ClosingSpaceReport-Final-Version.pdf

23. Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund, "*Standing Firm: Women– and Trans-led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society*, 2017. Available at: https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/mc_closing_space_report_def.pdf

24. Latin America has a long-standing tradition of clientelism, where politicians trade things to voters in exchange for their support. Politicians use two methods to maintain public dependency on them: information and resource control. Its pervasiveness in the region makes state policy often ineffective. Hilgers, Tina (Ed), "*Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*", Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights have lost support and funding from the government and are no longer invited to participate as experts in government organised events.

In countries where organised crime and urban violence is widespread and most often perpetrated by young people, such as in the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean,[25] youth run the risk of being stigmatised, particularly those from the low-income areas most associated with violence. These young people, including girls, are most at risk of suffering violence at the hands of gang members and also by the authorities who often assume all young people are engaged in criminal behaviour.

Bullying and harassment of girls and their organisations: a global phenomenon, exacerbated by the anonymity of the internet

Cases such as those of Malala Yousafzai[26] and Ahed Tamimi[27] have brought to the world's attention the potential risk and danger girls can face as a result of speaking out for their rights. Girls and women all over the world suffer harassment, threats and violence when they stand up for their rights and the internet has made cyber harassment and bullying more common.

Research[28] shows that cyber bullying has a "hugely disproportionate impact on women and girls."[29] The girls interviewed for this study confirmed that they and their groups have been victims of harassment and bullying, primarily online. Most of them said that the harassment they received online had never translated into physical violence. Still, some organisations take precautions. For example, one organisation said that although it uses Facebook for work, it never broadcasts live for security reasons. Although the group did not receive any threats, some of the members had to shut down their personal Facebook accounts or change their names due to the online bullying they were suffering prior to starting or joining the groups. They even said that a former member of the group had to leave the country due to threats she received from paramilitaries in her area.

25. The World Bank: *Urban Violence: A Challenge of Epidemic Proportions*, Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/09/06/urban-violence-a-challenge-of-epidemic-proportions
26. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2014/yousafzai/auto-biography/
27. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/internet-famous-in-the-west-bank/549557/
28. Most studies on cyber bullying that have made a gender distinction focus on the US, Canada, Australia or Europe. For example Sampasa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis and Xu (2014) surveyed 2,999 Canadian teenagers in relation to cyber bullying and suicide. The study found that the likelihood of being cyber bullied was twice as high for girls than boys. The findings validated older studies such as Snell & Englander, 2005 and Walrave et al., 2012.
29. Vancouver-based West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF).

PART 3
Supporting girl-led groups and initiatives

International stakeholders do not typically support girls directly. They collaborate with local partners, often women's organisations and girl-centred organisations

As has already been mentioned, girl-led groups and initiatives are often small, local and unregistered. International funding practices do not always respond to this form of organising.

Most of the groups led by girls 18 and under do not have web pages and reaching them is not easy. Even for those with a Facebook presence, finding their page is often like finding a needle in a haystack. Stakeholders say identifying the groups remains a major challenge and that they need to have a more significant presence on the ground to be able to identify, communicate with and support these groups.

In addition, most international stakeholders face serious legal and financial challenges in supporting unregistered groups. Even if these international organisations were willing and able to adapt to a more flexible granting process, they would still encounter some financial barriers. For example, with no legal and financial accountability, grants would need to be legally considered as donations, and there are strict restrictions on such a form of support, particularly in the United States.

Keeping in mind these restrictions, international foundations and stakeholders often use regional or local partners to reach grassroots organisations. Regional and local women's funds, women's organisations and girl-centred organisations are often the actors of choice in channelling support to girls and their organisations.

Women's funds, particularly local ones, are well placed to support girls and their work. With long trajectories in the field of women's and girls' leadership, they have also often earned the trust of international actors following long collaborations with them. In turn, as they work locally, they can also develop relationships of trust with the girls' groups, and can vouch for their work.

Women's funds, such as Fondo Lunaria in Colombia, the Women's Fund in Georgia, Filia in Germany, and Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), working regionally across Central America, have as part of their core commitment the support of teenage girls and young women[30] and are especially well placed to support them not only financially, but also in their internal growth and development processes.

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30. Due to local laws governing foundations, not all of them are able to provide financial support to unregistered groups

Financial support is key but it is NOT the only resource girl-led groups need

Previous research initiatives have concluded that funding is the greatest challenge for young feminist groups and initiatives.[31] The findings from this study certainly confirm that financial support is one of the most significant needs for girl-led groups; however, **it is important to highlight that financial support is not always seen by the girls as their greatest unmet need nor is it necessarily what they perceive as the most beneficial way other organisations can support them.**

Other needs identified by girls include support in building up technical and management skills as well as knowledge strengthening. These would help to ensure their sustainability and autonomy. In Africa, organisations have stressed the need for financial support, while in Latin America and the Caribbean girls were focused on strengthening their technical capacity. Additional needs identified included the opportunity for exchanges and collaborations with similar-minded groups, which they see as a perfect opportunity to learn from similar trailblazers in the field.

Networking with stakeholders, including potential donors is also very valuable for girl-led groups. Such opportunities give them the possibility to raise awareness around the issues on which they work, to give visibility to their initiatives and gain recognition, all of which are crucial in rallying financial and technical support for their groups and organisations.

Case Study: Exchanges among groups supported by Fondo Lunaria

Girl-led groups supported by Fondo Lunaria in Colombia, a feminist fund that mobilises resources for the strengthening of organisations of young diverse women, identified the networking opportunities offered by the Fund as one of the most valuable components of its awards package because it gave them the opportunity to meet other girls and initiatives similar to their own with whom they could establish synergies, collaborations and mutual support and learning.

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31. FRIDA and Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), *Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organising*, (2014).

CONCLUSION
Recommendations for supporting girls and their initiatives

As stressed in this study, and by many people before, girls are not just the future, they are the present of feminism and all other social movements. Their experiences are valid and important and should be recognised as such. Giving value to their work will not only benefit them and their communities but will also add value to the movement as a whole.

Supporting them must come from the recognition of the intrinsic value of their experiences and work and the prioritisation of their agency. This includes supporting their processes and organisations on their terms. Girls show extreme creativity in their work and in the way they overcome the challenges they face in organising. Here are the recommendations for supporting girls and their initiatives:

A careful, contextual approach

Funders should consider a careful and contextual approach to reaching girls who want to autonomously organise, helping them overcome their specific hurdles and challenges. In working with local organisations who channel funding to girls' groups, funders should try to ensure that the girls have decision making power of how these funds are spent. It is important to be mindful of the power dynamics and intergenerational tensions that have been reported by girls in this study. Sometimes, older feminists disagree with the positions that younger feminists are adopting and believe girl-led initiatives can seem too radical. It is crucial to encourage more intergenerational work where everyone can learn from each other. Funders should also accompany girl-led groups in their journeys to becoming independent if that is something they want.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

The main grievance that girls expressed was the lack of respect and recognition of the value of their work. Girls recognise that they are on a learning path: they have much to learn from their peers, as well as from other adults who have expertise in different fields. They want to be supported in their journey, but they don't want to be talked down to. They have valuable contributions to make and would like adults to recognise that as well. Girls want to be recognised for their current worth and not just for their potential. **It is crucial for adults that surround them and those seeking to support them to do so in a non-ageist and non-sexist way that respects them and recognises the importance of their experience and their work.**

#TogetherWeAreMore

Girls expressed the desire to learn from older activists but expect older activists (in particular feminists) to want to learn from girls too. The majority of girls and groups spoken with for this study identify as feminist, and the majority of them work around issues of gender inequality.[32] For them, older feminists are particularly important, and their recognition and support is particularly valuable for girls.

Girls also have as much to learn from one another as they do from older activists. Girls and their initiatives face unique challenges in their daily activism and they benefit greatly from being part of larger networks with other girls. In addition to providing support to one another, these networks can be platforms where collaboration, learning and exchange happen both regarding their groups and organisations as well as their personal experiences and struggles. Thus, **it is crucial to continue offering and supporting opportunities and initiatives for mutual learning and experience sharing.**

Provide support girls can access and support processes for the sake of processes

Each initiative and group is unique, much like the girls that are behind it. Girl-led initiatives may happen within established organisations, they may be independent, they may be motivated by personal experience, they may be legally registered, and they may involve boys. They may have all, several, or in some cases, none of these characteristics. Each group or initiative follows a distinctive process, which may or may not involve the group growing beyond the initial founders or remaining girl-led in the long term. Supporting girls and their initiatives means supporting these processes for what they contribute to the girls themselves, and not necessarily for the future of those groups.

However, it is important to recognise that despite their uniqueness, girl-led initiatives face common challenges posed by the patriarchal, and ageist society in which they operate. In order to reach them and support them in their processes, donors must recognise these specific barriers girls face. **Thus, it is crucial to continue providing flexible and responsive funding to unregistered, grassroots girl-led groups.**

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32. In this study, gender equality includes sexual diversity and identity, sexual and gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights, girls' empowerment and girls' access to education. In parallel to gender equality, girls also reported working on topics such as environmental justice and rights, health and disability rights, conflict resolution and the construction of historical memory (efforts to collect testimonies from communities affected by conflict or civil war in order to maintain a historical record of events).

Recognising Diversity

Any work involving girls should recognise, embrace and adapt to their diversity. It should be responsive and sensitive to their age, gender, sexual orientation, rural vs. urban differences and religion, etc. It should be guided by the principle that girls, in all their diversity, have a vast range of experiences that are important and that need to be recognised and valued. Within the diversity of girls, attention should be drawn to those facing multiple forms of oppression.

Recognise girls' time, effort and expertise

This research initiative integrated Girl Advisors as full participants and members of the research team. Their participation and expertise were invaluable. The adult members of the research team provided training prior to the start of the research and constant support throughout the implementation of the initiative via e-mail, Skype, telephone and WhatsApp, as needed by each girl. In addition, as recognition of their work, Girl Advisors were compensated monetarily for their participation. Recognising that there are other forms of compensation and recognition of girls' involvement in research initiatives such as this one, the girls were asked their opinion on the matter in the hope that it can help guide future participative research processes.

Girl advisors indicated that in recognition of their time, effort and expertise they would like to be offered learning opportunities, both in the form of trainings and education (with official certificates) as well as through internship and mentorship programs. They identified building their capacity and developing their technical skills as crucial for them, their activism and the groups and organisations with which they collaborate. However, girls also recognise the value of monetary compensation given the opportunities for development it can grant them and their organisations.
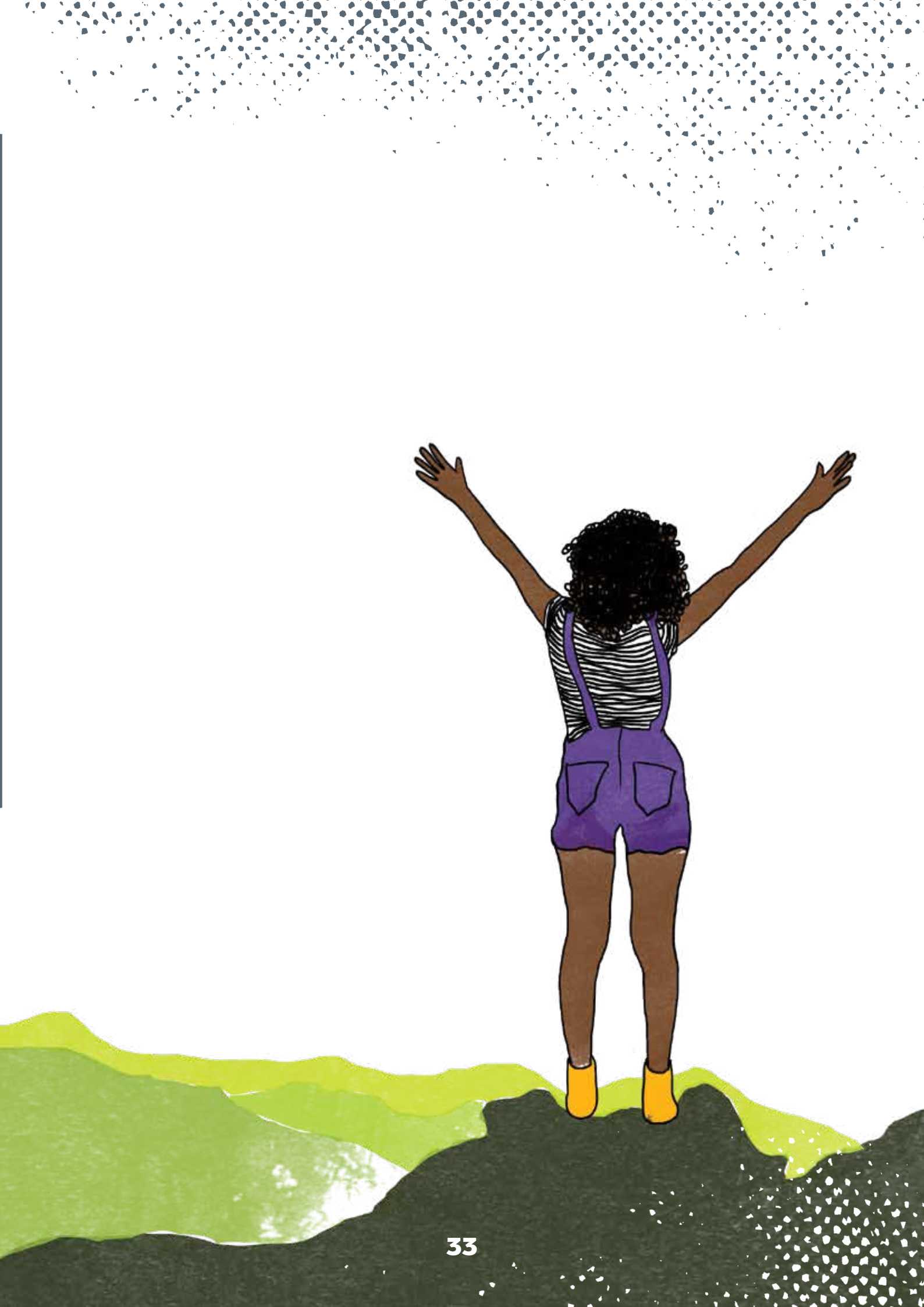
ANNEX 1. METHODOLOGY

Please find a detailed description of the methodology used in this research.

Desk Review
Identification and examination of documentation relevant to girl-led and girl-centred organising.

This included previous studies or donor reports on related issues, UN publications, academic publications, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs from girl-led groups and initiatives, web pages of organisations working to support girl-led initiatives, social network pages focused on girl activism, etc.

In-Depth Interviews
Girl-led groups, initiatives or organisations

Semi-structured interviews of 30-45 minutes with representatives from girl-led groups or organisations were carried out by different members of the research team, including IWORDS Global team and Girl Advisors. The interviews were carried out via Skype, WhatsApp, LINE, Zoom, telephone or face-to-face (where feasible). They were carried out in English or in the local language when conducted by the Girl Advisors.

The researchers aimed to conduct around 25 interviews-- one or two in the United States and Canada, and around five to six in the other four regions covered by, and prioritised, in this report: Africa and West Asia; East, South and Southeast Asia and Oceania; Europe; Central and North Asia; and Latin America and the Caribbean. Girl advisors were included in the interviews. A total of 112 interviews were conducted for stakeholders, girl-led groups/organisations/initiatives, girl-centred organisations, girl activists and girl leaders.

The interviews were crucial to the understanding of their stories and perspectives and served as the basis for the development of case studies. Those are described in the section below.

Stakeholders
The research team conducted 30-45 minutes of semi-structured interviews with four stakeholders per region and five global ones. Stakeholders included international organisations that support girl-led groups or focus their work on girls. This number allowed for several perspectives per region and at the local level, while remaining manageable for analysis and triangulation. The inclusion of stakeholders was important to compare information among sources. Stakeholders provided new data which could complement, compare or challenge the information obtained from girl-led groups.

Case Studies
Based on the organisations chosen for the in-depth interviews, 11 were selected for the development of a case study. A more extensive questionnaire was developed for those.

Online Surveys (Survey Monkey)

Two online surveys for two different target populations (girl-led groups/organisations and stakeholders) were drafted and uploaded to Survey Monkey. To address barriers to internet access, an offline version was made available and disseminated as needed. For these cases, the IWORDS Global research team manually inputted the data into Survey Monkey for ease of analysis. While the team recognised the value of a survey with open-ended questions (and the depth of information that could be collected through it), it was decided this would limit the number of organisations interviewed due to time and budget constraints.

The questionnaire was implemented in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Arabic and included two open-ended questions, with answers of maximum 100 words, for additional insight into the barriers and definition of success.

Girl-led groups

We proposed a target of approximately 60 to 65 girl-led organisations with maximum geographical diversity and representation. Although we had included the global north in our scope -primarily as groups from this region fit into transnational activism-, the main focus of this research was on Africa and West Asia; East, South and Southeast Asia and Oceania; Europe; Central and North Asia; and Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, the study aimed to give visibility to small, often informal, truly girl-led groups that may not be on the radar of traditional donors.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders (international organisations that support girl-led groups or focus their work on girls) who did participate in the semi-structured in-depth interviews were given the questionnaire. Their input was important for a comparative view of the information obtained from girl-led groups or organisations.

Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER Review)

To capture the girl-led groups' perspectives and stories, the research team implemented an adapted version of the PEER Review method (participatory ethnographic evaluation and research). Members of the target group (girl activists) conducted conversational interviews with other peers (in this case girl activists involved in girl-led groups, organisations, or initiatives) on their stories and perspectives. This approach enabled a more authentic 'insider view' and helped overcome barriers of culture, language and mistrust. This was particularly suited to non-literate groups and people with no previous research experience.

The IWORDS Global team recruited girl activists to become Girl Advisors who were trained as peer interviewers to collect stories from girl-led groups and organisations and stakeholders. FRIDA assisted in providing one of their Girl Advisors who is now fully engaged with its team.

IWORDS Global provided training to the Girl Advisors on interviewing skills and provided them with an interview guide to ensure they felt comfortable. The training was provided individually via Skype or Zoom and was reinforced by the Girl Advisors participating jointly with the IWORDS Global team on interviews.

Support was provided constantly by the IWORDS Global team to the Girl Advisors as and when required during the process, mainly through Skype and WhatsApp. Girl Advisors, just like the rest of the team, recorded interviews (with consent) and were asked to give their impressions after each interview and to make available their notes to the rest of the team for use during the analysis process.
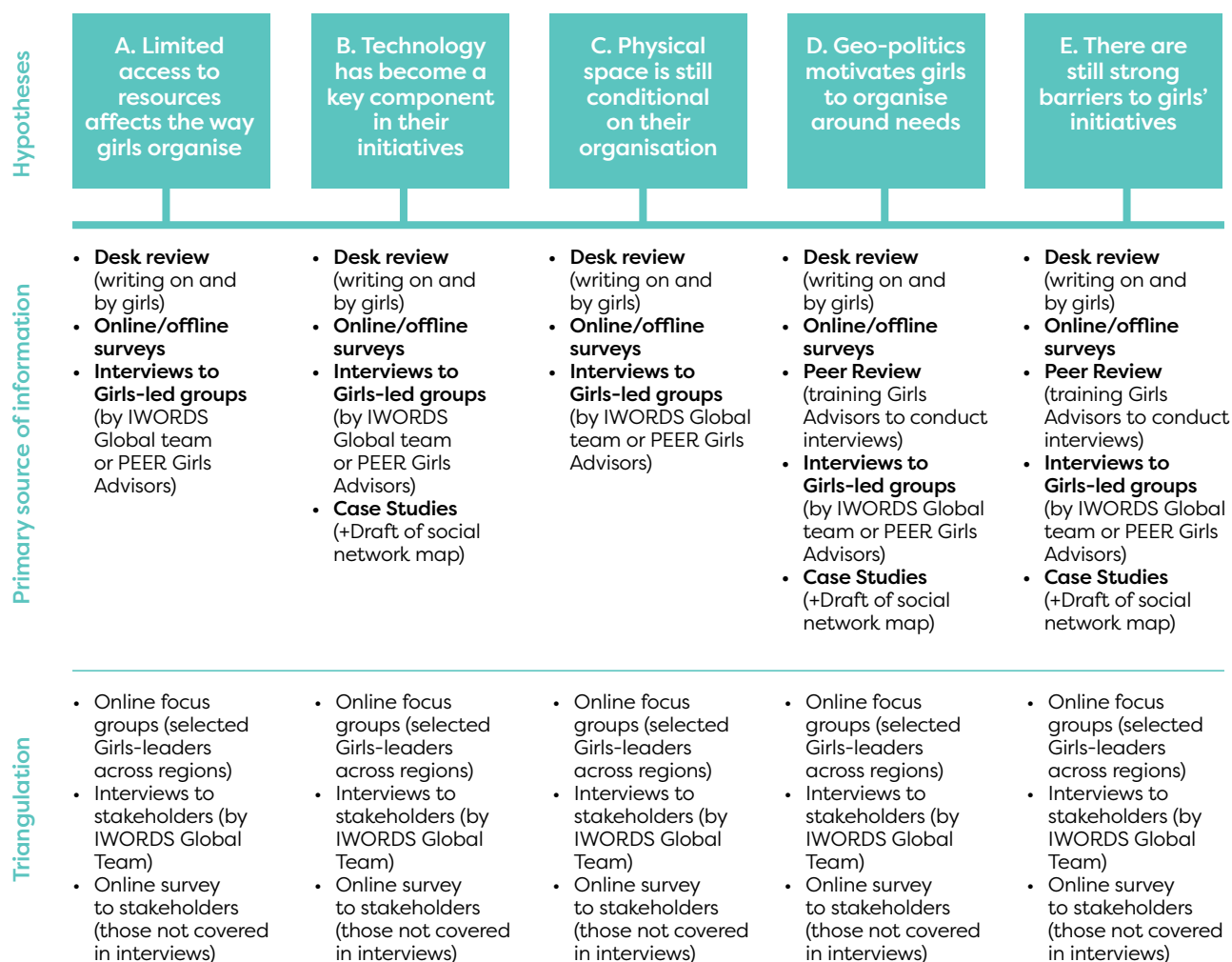
During the analysis and triangulation of data, and to ensure the Girls' involvement in the process, the IWORDS Global team held in-depth calls with them to carry out a joint analysis and to discuss their experience of participating in the research study and what they had identified as findings from the information they had collected through interviews.

Online Focus Groups

The original methodology called for the implementation of two online focus groups (in Spanish and English) with girl leaders identified and invited to participate. The focus groups were meant to give girls the chance to talk about their stories and challenges in a free and safe environment, and to learn from other participants' stories. This methodology could not be implemented given the limited availability and connectivity of the girl leaders in all regions. Securing interviews with these girls was already quite challenging, involving them in online focus groups was deemed unrealistic given their busy schedules.

Methodology Framework

The figure below shows a summary of our methodology.

	A. Limited access to resources affects the way girls organise	B. Technology has become a key component in their initiatives	C. Physical space is still conditional on their organisation	D. Geo-politics motivates girls to organise around needs	E. There are still strong barriers to girls' initiatives
Hypotheses					
Primary source of information	• **Desk review** (writing on and by girls) • **Online/offline surveys** • **Interviews to Girls-led groups** (by IWORDS Global team or PEER Girls Advisors)	• **Desk review** (writing on and by girls) • **Online/offline surveys** • **Interviews to Girls-led groups** (by IWORDS Global team or PEER Girls Advisors) • **Case Studies** (+Draft of social network map)	• **Desk review** (writing on and by girls) • **Online/offline surveys** • **Interviews to Girls-led groups** (by IWORDS Global team or PEER Girls Advisors)	• **Desk review** (writing on and by girls) • **Online/offline surveys** • **Peer Review** (training Girls Advisors to conduct interviews) • **Interviews to Girls-led groups** (by IWORDS Global team or PEER Girls Advisors) • **Case Studies** (+Draft of social network map)	• **Desk review** (writing on and by girls) • **Online/offline surveys** • **Peer Review** (training Girls Advisors to conduct interviews) • **Interviews to Girls-led groups** (by IWORDS Global team or PEER Girls Advisors) • **Case Studies** (+Draft of social network map)
Triangulation	• Online focus groups (selected Girls-leaders across regions) • Interviews to stakeholders (by IWORDS Global Team) • Online survey to stakeholders (those not covered in interviews)	• Online focus groups (selected Girls-leaders across regions) • Interviews to stakeholders (by IWORDS Global Team) • Online survey to stakeholders (those not covered in interviews)	• Online focus groups (selected Girls-leaders across regions) • Interviews to stakeholders (by IWORDS Global Team) • Online survey to stakeholders (those not covered in interviews)	• Online focus groups (selected Girls-leaders across regions) • Interviews to stakeholders (by IWORDS Global Team) • Online survey to stakeholders (those not covered in interviews)	• Online focus groups (selected Girls-leaders across regions) • Interviews to stakeholders (by IWORDS Global Team) • Online survey to stakeholders (those not covered in interviews)

Annex 2: The experience of Girl Advisors

Nalubega Solea Winnie (Uganda)

I never thought of myself as a girl activist before, but if fighting for girls' positions and rights in society describes me as one, I am delighted to be one. I started advocating for girls' rights when I was 14, and ever since then, I have never looked back. I have worked with many organisations, groups and initiatives to make sure that there is at least a little change for girls regarding their education and accessing basic needs, especially sanitary pads. At least, for now, I can say no girl misses school because they do not have sanitary pads. The work to transfer the sanitary pads to many communities, especially in remote areas where girls are more oppressed, was possible only with the collaboration and involvement of various organisations.

What do you consider to be the most positive aspect of your involvement in this study? I have gained a lot of experience both in research and how girl-led organisations operate around the world, that's why I believe the knowledge I received will help me begin similar kinds of initiatives in future.

What was your biggest challenge as a co-researcher in this study? My biggest challenge was the refusal of a few girl-led organisations and initiatives to participate in the research study. Also because of the poor network connection in Uganda, sometimes I would fail to get in touch with the person I was interviewing and had to reschedule the call for another day.

Jona Claire S. Turalde (Philippines)

During my four years of advocacy, I've worked with organisations tackling youth engagement and school-based organisations, which are led by women. I worked with them on different projects such as in school-based forums, first aid training and workshops on sexual and reproductive health and rights of an adolescent.

What do you consider to be the most positive aspect of your involvement in this study? The most positive aspect of this study was that I got to use what I learned in school and in my current degree program on handling interviews and applying useful probing questions. It has also helped me to analyse what questions were useful in a particular context.

What was your biggest challenge as a co-researcher in this study? My biggest challenge was really balancing my time with my school and the time of the interviews as well as technological downfalls/ inefficiencies.

Zhanna Zharmatova (Kyrgyzstan)

I was the organiser of local initiative Girls Activists of Kyrgyzstan since 2015 that was led by girls under 18, which is one of the initiatives of Bishkek Feminist Initiatives, in which I was involved since I was 14. Right now, I'm the coordinator of a local initiative, Teenagers and Youth for Justice and Equality, an initiative led by teenagers under 19.

What do you consider to be the positive aspect of your involvement in this study? I believe that one of the most positive aspects was an opportunity to represent Central Asia, as it is very often left behind.

What was your biggest challenge as a co-researcher in this study? The biggest challenge was school, exams, future university. That has been overwhelming sometimes and sometimes distracting. Society requires a lot from you when you are a teenager; school requires you to study hard, parents need you to choose a profession and university immediately, regional activism requires you to act every day. So perhaps the biggest challenge was time management.

Deka Ahmed, Hibo Sahane Ahmed, Muhubo Idle, and Samira Bare (Kenya)

Our experience [involvement with civil society organisations] has been great; we can comfortably say that it has increased our expertise in the different areas like in dealing with the community directly and with the government both directly and indirectly.

What do you consider to be the most positive aspect of your involvement in this study? The most positive aspect of the study was getting to know and networking with the various organisations in the area that we didn't know before and to enhance the work we are doing.

What was your biggest challenge as a co-researcher in this study? The biggest challenge for us was time. Finding the right time for both the researcher and the respondent was a hurdle for us.

María René Tapía Limachi (Bolivia)

I am currently responsible for the Comprehensive Social Commission of the Plurinational Council of Youth and I coordinate the Departmental Platforms for Unplanned Pregnancies of Youth and Adolescents at the national level, and I am also part of the youth programme "Advocacy Youth Catalyst" of IPPF.

What do you consider to be the most positive aspect of your involvement in this study? I could learn many things at the personal level, and I was able to establish a connection with the organisations I interviewed, it was a great experience. I think that this new initiative of peer interviews helps a lot and creates better relations.

What was your biggest challenge as a co-researcher in this study? I had planned to interview as many organisations in Latin America as possible; however, due to time constraints and the challenges of internet speed and connectivity, I was not able to. I realised that there aren't many organisations led by girls 18 and under, and in some countries if they do exist they are not visible. There were also some organisations that declined to be interviewed or did not have the time for it.

Annex 3: Tips for Implementing Participatory and Intergenerational Research

The full involvement and participation of girls in this research was crucial for the research process. This type of participatory research continues to be the exception, not the rule. The research team hopes to see similar processes and the recognition of girls' agency becoming the norm. With that in mind, and based on the experience of this research study, here are some tips for future participatory and intergenerational research initiatives:

- **Plan for extra time.** Girls have hectic schedules with school, family responsibilities, extracurricular activities, etc. and often do not have much extra time to dedicate to research activities, so processes understandably take much longer than with adults.

- **Be flexible with time and methodologies.** When planning work and activities that involve girls, make sure to consider their personal lives, for instance taking into account when school holidays or exam periods are scheduled. Also, girls may feel more or less comfortable with certain types of methodologies and may at times require more extensive support than older researchers (or less) so be prepared to adapt as needed.

- **Though most girls make use of technology, they do not use the same tools as adults generally do.** Don't overestimate (or underestimate) girls' technological skills. While girls and young people may be very tech savvy when it comes to tools like Facebook and WhatsApp, they may not be as familiar with other work tools such as Microsoft Office. Do not assume they have (or not) a handle on them. Assess their abilities and be ready to provide support as needed.

- **Be prepared to use Facebook and other social networks.** Girls and young people feel increasingly comfortable using Facebook (and other social networks to a lesser extent) not only for their personal use but also for their professional endeavours. Be prepared to use it. As Facebook encourages the use of images, be prepared with the appropriate image release forms.

- **When engaging girls locally make sure to engage their entire communities.** Families are more likely to see girls' involvement in research studies positively if they understand what they are doing and how they will benefit from them. If girls will be doing work in their communities, make sure to also involve community leaders and get them on board with the initiative.

- **Always keep in mind the principle of Do No Harm.** Depending on the sociocultural context girls live in, it may be more or less accepted for them to participate in research initiatives. Before involving them, consider the potential risks of them being involved in the initiative, and if any are identified establish a plan to mitigate them. If they cannot be mitigated, then consider whether the girls should be participating at all. Always prioritise their safety and wellbeing over the study.

- **When in doubt, ask!** Adults working in the field of youth participation often believe they are clear on what it takes to ensure youth involvement and participation that go beyond tokenism. However, this does not necessarily preclude them from having an adult-centred perspective at times. Thus, it is crucial to always ask girls what they need and want to ensure that their participation is real from their perspective as well as those of the adults.