

WOMEN DELIVER 2026

SAFEGUARDING RIGHTS & AGENCY: ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT IN SHRINKING CIVIL SPACES

Hosted by The Adolescent Girls Investment Plan, this session fostered intergenerational accountability and collective action to uphold safeguarding as a shared commitment to protect and advance girls' rights, agency and leadership in increasingly challenging environments.

FRIDA on safeguarding gaps in philanthropy:

A traditional, inflexible grantmaking design: unfortunately many grantmaking opportunities which adolescent girls and non binary persons can access are not adaptable to their realities. This makes it challenging to successfully and autonomously apply for and receive funding or report adequately if the funding is secured. Grantmaking which does not allow adolescents to center their needs and ideas impacts the creativity, autonomy and sustainability of the work.

Payments: moving grants to teenage-led organisations usually requires an external account of a trusted adult or organisation. This exposes groups to potential power imbalances and exploitation. In general, banking, registration or any financial systems, are to a greater extent designed for adults, creating barriers to direct access to funding.

Safety: safeguarding risks in activist spaces are often psychosocial, not just physical. Without additional support girls might not have the capacity nor the resources to support themselves and tend to be at risk of exploitation - especially in spaces where there is pressure to have teenage/adolescent presence but does not actually have any safeguarding in place.

Flexible, trust-based funding approaches are essential to safeguarding adolescent girls. This includes adaptable communication, reporting, and funding mechanisms. Offering opportunities for capacity strengthening, adequate pay for work done, prioritising well-being etc. Importantly, think through how you will approach funding adolescents so that their needs are central to your strategy rather than an 'add on'. FRIDA continues to follow and strengthen its Teenage Girl Strategy which guides how we approach resourcing teenage girl led and focused grantees.

Work very closely with adolescent led groups to support them to maintain as much autonomy as possible in the payment process. Take the time to learn from them and strengthen their capacity around payment processes, especially around fiscal sponsorship relationships. Invest in a trust based relationship with groups so that they are able to share both their wins and their challenges. They should see you as a funding *partner* - this is important as this shifts how they may or may not share challenges or difficulties with payment processes.

Resource care and well being support for adolescents to prevent potential safeguarding risks. Build their capacity to respond to these risks in their contexts and to learn and share from each other. This can be done through grants as well as networks spaces.