



**RESOURCING GIRLS AND YOUNG ACTIVISTS
THROUGH A PANDEMIC | MAY 2021**

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*The Global Resilience Fund resources girls, trans, non binary and young women activists. We have done our best to capture this in this report and make the language inclusive, realising that representation and language are political. We recognise that sometimes our language is not always consistent, however are in a constant process of learning and unlearning. We believe that girls and young people should have the space to autonomously self define and determine who they are and how they identify.



1. INTRODUCTION AND BREAKTHROUGH LEARNINGS

'Weathering the Storm' lifts up the hopes, dreams and realities of young activists organising against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on lessons from a feminist fund set up to resource their resistance through the crisis, this report brings together a diversity of voices from across the globe and from funder and activist communities. Rooted in community conversations, creative expressions and political analysis, these collective contributions show beyond doubt that it is not only *possible* to fund girls, trans and young women activists now, but that to do so is *essential* for our collective liberation.

As the realities of COVID-19 began to unfold in early 2020, it soon became clear that girls and young women, trans and non binary people – already battling the compounding effects of patriarchy, white supremacy and imperialist extraction – would be the very worst affected. Like any other crisis, COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the existing systemic oppression and violence that positions girls and young people as particularly vulnerable, especially girls who face multiple forms of oppression.

At the same time, girls and young women are showing up in this moment with the bravery, resilience and organising power they bring to all of their activism. As the state and traditional agencies retreated, and as lockdowns took hold across the world, girls and young women have been responding and organising in their communities. Their ability to be resilient and to resist, care and stand in solidarity with their communities, was fortified by the close relationships and the systems of support they have woven for each other. The emergence of mutual aid networks and solidarity economies to move supplies, of digital spaces of care and creativity, and of the persistence to find ways to organise, even in the most difficult circumstances, demonstrates their ability to weather the storm.

Housed and facilitated by Purposeful, the Global Resilience Fund was launched by a cross-section of donors as a temporary pop-up fund, to directly support girls and young women's brave and transformative strategies. Rooted in principles of trust, solidarity and reciprocity, the Fund seeks to move resources at speed and scale through models of shared power. Because young activists show up across movements, sectors and regions, the Fund has created an opportunity for a diverse range of donors to come together and collaborate in new and transformative ways, leading to unprecedented possibilities..

- X **Between May and December 2020, the Fund received a total of 1,240 applications** with 501 eligible applications reviewed by an activist panel from across the world.
- X **Originally conceived by Purposeful and Women Win, the Fund is now powered by the collective resources of 25 donors and foundations.**
- X **To date, the fund has supported 234 grassroots groups from 91 countries, leveraging over \$1,000,000 in direct support.**
- X **Every organisation is led by young women, trans or non binary people under 30 years-old. 25% are led by girls under 19 years-old, and the vast majority are unregistered.**

With the knowledge that crisis is an ever-present reality for so many, it is clear to us that modelling feminist partnership and inclusive rapid-response resourcing will only grow in importance. We share this report in the hope to contribute to those future efforts, and with a deep and unshakeable belief in the power and vision of girls and young women everywhere. Their insights and expertise shared through this process show, without doubt, that investing in their leadership, movements and activism is critical to building a world of justice, freedom and dignity.

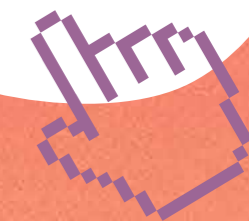


ABOUT THIS REPORT

Weathering the Storm is an offering - a tapestry - of voices and perspectives from the activist advisors who powered the fund, drawing on case studies of girl and young feminist-led groups, first-hand reflections and creative contributions that bring to life the realities of organising in and beyond a pandemic. The report also offers a unique set of perspectives from the diverse group of funders who make up the Global Resilience Fund community. Sometimes quotes are attributed to individuals and sometimes their insights are woven together as broader reflections. The many contributions and reflections from activists and funders are representative of the journey of this Fund, drawing on the power of the collective, weaving experiences and lessening the distance between us.

THE MANY CONTRIBUTIONS AND REFLECTIONS FROM ACTIVISTS AND FUNDERS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE JOURNEY OF THIS FUND

As you move through this report, make sure to click on the different **LINKS** to fully experience the depth and diversity of content on offer from our community!



To create this report, we collected and drew on the following data:

- ✗ Literature, reports and news articles
- ✗ 18 Learning calls attended by 106 activists from funded groups
- ✗ 501 coded applications
- ✗ Interviews with 26 funders and 15 activists
- ✗ Written or artistic reflections shared by 15 activists

Right Side Human Rights Defender
NGO, Armenia.



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

KEY LESSONS OF FEMINIST FUNDING

The Global Resilience Fund offers a unique insight into the worlds and wisdom of young feminist activists across the world, as well as an unprecedented opportunity to learn more about what it takes to resource their resistance in a crisis in truly responsive ways. Through the report, we explore both the politics of girls and young women's organising and the very real practices we must deploy, as funder allies, in order to shift power and reach those usually shut out from traditional philanthropic processes. Here, we share key lessons learned on the politics and practices of resourcing young feminist activism through a crisis and beyond. As the Fund moves into a new phase in 2021, we offer these in-process learnings as a way to ensure our own practices remain responsive and accountable to this extraordinary community, and to inspire others committed to doing more and better for girls and young women activists across the world. These learnings build on the ground-breaking work of FRIDA and other feminist funders who paved the way for this Fund.

1. ON YOUNG FEMINIST REALITIES:

Young feminists are organising against the backdrop of violence and repression, yet they bring creativity, joy, love, and liberatory tactics to all that they do. Despite the odds, they are creating long-term strategies for change, whilst meeting the immediate needs of their communities in and beyond the pandemic. Although they do a little with a lot, they deserve to be resourced now.

★ Young feminist activists and broader feminist movements are experiencing increased violence during the pandemic.

Across the world, backlash, repression and violence has intensified during the pandemic, with many governments using the health crisis as a blank cheque to tighten restrictions and controls, and to close civic spaces in order to shut down dissent. Surveillance in the digital space is increasingly becoming an issue for access and mobility in the COVID-19 response. As outlined in the recent report by the Global Philanthropy Project and Elevate Children's Funders Group on Manufacturing Moral Panic; *'Public health measures like lockdowns have been weaponised as de-democratisation and militarisation tools. For example; 'states of emergency' powers have been used to facilitate coercive state interventions, put restrictions on the press, and limit freedom of expression and association, among others (SPW, 2020).'*

★ Young feminist activists ground themselves in the practices of care, creativity, healing, and trauma relief.

Young feminist activists are providing key services related to psychological and critical support and wellbeing for their communities during this time. Sometimes this is in the shape of formal professional access to psychologists and mental health needs, as well as creating safe spaces, outlets and generative places for people to come and share their experiences. These practices existed before funding was available, however flexible resources support them to thrive, deepen and multiply. Groups themselves need additional support to take care of themselves, as they serve their communities as often they are not finding time or funds to meet their own mental health needs. This work is critical in reducing isolation and supporting people's mental health, and in some cases, it becomes a lifeline.



★ **Many groups need funding for emergency relief and service delivery - this also counts as feminist organising.**

In many contexts, there has been a failure of the state to provide services, especially for girls and women on the margins - trans activists, sex workers, girls and young people living with disabilities, migrant, indigenous communities and more. The pandemic has led to even less accessibility of services, further isolation and increased violence for girls and women. Groups addressed the gaps in emergency responses, protection systems, intersectoral collaboration and synergies, especially in situations both pre and post pandemic. While traditionally, many feminist funders have not necessarily classified service delivery and basic relief as feminist activism, providing such services in the context of the pandemic is highly political work, and is fundamental to the organising of young women.

★ **While young feminists can do a lot with little, the need for resources is greater than ever.**

Groups continue to need more resources. While the amount of money they were given in this Fund was critical, and in some contexts, small amounts of funding have gone a long way, there remains a critical need to move more resources to young feminist and girl-led groups. Resourcing young activists also means compensating them for their time and expertise across fund processes. Spanning from the panelists through to grantee partners supported by the Fund, many groups were able to offer financial compensation to their communities for their work and time as a direct result of this Fund. In a moment when many had lost their jobs or main source of income and had little access to funding, this additional financial support was critical to their work and their overall wellbeing.

2. ON RESOURCING RESISTANCE THROUGH A PANDEMIC AND BEYOND:

This moment calls on us as funders and allies to show up with the bravery and resilience that young feminists bring to their work every day. In order to reach them at the scale and speed they deserve, we must step out of our business-as-usual models and find new ways to move resources to support this work.

★ **We must lower barriers to access and broaden the decision-making table to truly reach young activists organising at the margins.**

It has been said before, but it's still not the norm so, we'll say it again; core and flexible funding continues to be critical during a crisis. Supporting grassroots activists to be resilient and responsive means trusting them to decide how funds are used so that they have space to pivot quickly when they need to. The way groups are able to access and receive funding is also key. Reaching girl-led collectives and first-time funded, unregistered groups means we must get creative about how we spread the word, take proposals, decide who should be resourced, and ultimately distribute funds. Even the most functional of activities like signing grant-agreements, need to be radically re-imagined in the service of young activists' own structures and visions. Through the report, we offer a window into some of these strategies, as well as, reflections on the challenges of re-imagining grant-making practices. Ultimately, funding in more responsive ways allows for intersectional grant-making and resourcing work across multiple movement spaces, reflecting the realities of how girls and young women organise.

★ **An openness to be courageous and take risks is essential to supporting work to sustain and flourish. In fact, our ability to respond to what is ahead, depends on it.**

The Fund was sparked by people coming together quickly and fiercely committing to moving resources to the margins. This was only possible because people trusted each other and felt the need was greater than the risk. As the pandemic plunged everyone into a new reality, new ground for solidarity, overlapping experience and possibility opened up amongst funders in this community. Many of those who have resourced the Fund



Leer para Soñar, El Salvador.

made an extra effort to move money swiftly and flexibly, including waiving the usual proposal and reporting requirements. The collective willingness to embrace messiness, hold tensions and contradictions, and to be constantly learning together, shows what is possible in future funder collaboratives.


The Fund did not strive for perfection, but rather to show up for girls when they needed it most. Trust, relationships and the work of so many who have come before, is what ultimately makes the work possible.

 **Bringing an intersectional lens from the beginning, enables funding to reach girls and young women who are often excluded from funding opportunities.**

The Fund intentionally held an explicit intersectional lens from its creation. The participation and leadership across such a diversity of funder and non-funder activists, deepened and strengthened the political analysis held through the process, including its ability to be more deeply intersectional. Funders and activist advisors challenged all aspects of the process, from decision-making pathways through to which questions were asked in the proposals and how those proposals were scored, making the process stronger and more inclusive. This resulted in reaching groups often excluded from funding opportunities, such as trans girls and young women, non-binary young people and those working on disability rights.



HERA Organisation, Libya.

 **We need a thriving ecosystem of organisations resourcing this work at every level.**

Girls and young women are organising across every justice movement and every corner of the world. In order not to miss girls where they are - which is everywhere - we must explicitly name them (and then resource them) across all of our strategies, through regional, movement, sectoral or issue lenses.

There remains a need for diverse funders to continue to find ways to come together in moments of crisis. A thriving funding ecosystem for girls and young women involves different funders playing different roles. This means recognising our limitations and working to nourish different actors within the funding ecosystem. What is clear, is that to reach groups organising at the margins of the margins, we need new kinds of funding models rooted locally and easily accessible - there is only so much a global fund will ever be able to do. We all have a role to play; from private philanthropy that can leverage vast resources quickly, to local and regional funds that hold deep relationships to move resources to smaller groups, to the very smallest national funds that can sit with young activists right where they are, taking cash in red tin boxes to girls, just as this Fund was able to do in Sierra Leone. No matter our positionality, we must continue to strengthen relationships towards a thriving ecosystem of funding for young activists. Not one of us can do this work alone.



2. THE EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19 FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG ACTIVISTS



Like any other crisis, COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the existing systemic oppression and violence that positions girls and young women as particularly vulnerable, especially girls who face multiple forms of oppression. History has proven that during times of crisis, adolescent girls are more likely to drop out of school, suffer from violence and discrimination, marry early, become pregnant and **lose their livelihoods**.

AT THE SAME TIME, DURING CRISIS MOMENTS, GIRLS OFTEN ASSUME EVEN GREATER ADULT RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ESPECIALLY DURING A PUBLIC HEALTH-RELATED CRISIS, BEAR THE BURDEN OF INCREASED CARETAKING NEEDS.

Due to lockdown and subsequent school closures, over 767 million girls in 188 countries have had their **schooling interrupted**. These continued interruptions increase the risk of girls dropping out of school permanently. As we learned during the 2013 Ebola outbreak, the longer a girl remains out of school, the less likely she is to return.² For so many girls around the world, school is about much more than a pathway to the future, it is a source of basic food security, a chance to connect with a community of peers, and an opportunity to grow and develop as autonomous individuals, helping them become more confident and equipped to stand up for their rights and to those around them.

UNFPA estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic may result in 13 million more **child marriages** between 2020-2030³ and that it has not only impacted girls and young feminists' present reality, but also their futures. UNESCO estimates that about 10 million more secondary school girls may be permanently out of school as a result of the pandemic. Furthermore, as the economic recession continues, a rise in child marriage often follows, as families who are already at the economic margins and often working in now decimated informal economies, struggle to feed themselves and where dowries offer desperately needed monetary relief.

Girls and women are more likely to be the **primary caregivers in their families** and more likely to be on the frontline as domestic workers (80%) and healthcare and social care workers (70%⁴), increasing their exposure to COVID-19 through their care work. An Oxfam study on care responsibilities during COVID-19 in rural and low-income communities, found that women spent up to 14 hours a day doing unpaid care work, and it was girls who overwhelmingly filled in or supported their mothers in completing this work.⁵ UN Women projects that by the end of 2021, 47 million more girls and women will be **pushed into extreme poverty**, resulting in 435 million girls and women living on less than 1.90 USD a day.

Considerable additional care responsibilities, economic stress, and social isolation have resulted in increased **anxiety, depression and a sense of hopelessness** for girls and young women about their futures.⁶ A September 2020 UNICEF poll of 8,444 youth aged between 13-29 years-old in nine Caribbean and Latin American countries, found that 27% of respondents reported feeling anxiety and 15% reported feeling depression during the past seven days. Furthermore, for girls and young women with disabilities, COVID-19 has compounded a sense of visibility and ableism, fueling existing fears that their **lives were less valuable** than their able-bodied peers. A March 2020 global survey by Women Enabled International (WEI) of 100 girls, women, non-binary, and trans people around the world, found that 81% had an increased fear of 'healthcare rationing', or healthcare providers being forced, or choosing, to prioritise the wellness of some populations over others. Social media reports of 'healthcare rationing' incidents around the globe further fuelled this sense of anxiety and insecurity.⁷

Girls and young women have been particularly affected in the global loss of livelihoods. The majority of them work in the informal and service sectors which have been significantly affected due to the restrictions that have accompanied COVID-19 regulations.

GIVEN THE LIMITED ACCESS TO FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN THEIR WORK, THEY HAVE OFTEN RELIED ON THEIR OWN SOURCES OF INCOME AND LOCAL RESOURCE MOBILISATION FROM MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT THEIR INITIATIVES.

This has meant that groups can no longer self-sustain their initiatives nor can they seek support from their members or community. The result has been their **inability to continue their initiatives**, to continue to pay for spaces they use to organise, connect and agitate.

In addition to dealing with COVID-19, groups operate in **hostile political and economic contexts** such as the arrests and torture of peaceful protestors⁸ following the disputed elections in Belarus, the economic crisis and Beirut blast in Lebanon⁹ or natural disasters, such as the floods in Samoa,¹⁰ earthquake in Croatia¹¹ or hurricanes in Central America.¹² In many contexts, governments have used the pandemic as a blanket excuse to tighten civic space and limit the work of civil society. For unregistered groups led by girls or young women, the difficulty to access resources and operate has become even more precarious.



NAVIGATING A PANDEMIC

PERSPECTIVES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

In this section, young activists who form part of the Global Resilience Fund community as panelists to help decide where the funding goes, lift up their own experiences of surviving and organising through a global pandemic.

BRAZIL: BOLSONARO, THE BURNING AMAZON AND BRAVE YOUNG FEMINISTS

ARIANE COR, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, BRAZIL

This is what the chaos looked like in Brazil - **loneliness, abandonment, pain, our Amazon and Pantanal regions on fire, the increase in cases of domestic violence, rape and femicide**, the murder of indigenous and quilombola leaders, recurring news of black children killed by police weapons in communities, the hunger, unemployment and the number of families living on the streets.

It was the most vulnerable who were left to fend for themselves. The feeling of helplessness and despair persisted for days and nights. In addition to the individual crisis that each of us felt for our own lives and those of our loved ones, we were plagued by concern about our political performance during the pandemic, in a country governed by an **extreme right, misogynist, homophobic, racist and destroyer of the planet**.

FOR US FEMINISTS, WHO WEAVE OUR NETWORKS OF SOLIDARITY THROUGH AFFECTION, BETWEEN WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS, MARCHES, CIRCLES AND PARTIES, MEASURES OF PHYSICAL DISTANCE, IN ORDER TO CONTAIN THE PANDEMIC, HAVE BROUGHT EVEN MORE CHALLENGES TO OUR DAILY STRUGGLE.

Through the Global Resilience Fund, we were able to access the responses of so many - from peasant companions in Bolivia and indigenous youth in Mexico, to deaf women in Kenya, sex workers in India, queers in Palestine and mothers and caregivers around the world. All of them working with extraordinary creativity to find solutions and defending the rights of girls, women and LGBTQI+ people, so that better futures are possible.

For the full article by Ariane visit the [LINK](#)



MONGOLIA: GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

SARANZAYA GERELT-OD, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, MONGOLIA

COVID-19 **exacerbated the inequality in existence in Inner Asia** and parts of Central Asia. Since early 2020, most countries in this region had no choice but to close the borders, and subsequently, schools, local businesses, and public gatherings were shut.

Mongolia's economy relies heavily on China's import products and many small businesses led by women had to shut down due to the shortage of raw material after the border closure. Caring responsibility, children's education and remote working then just added more pressure on women's shoulders.

Gender-based violence, specifically intimate partner violence, saw a sharp increase of 42% compared to 2019 during the first quarter of 2020 (UNFPA Mongolia, 2020). The need for domestic violence shelter services increased by 62%, and child incidents, child neglect, child sexual abuse, and women's mental health also reported significant increases. Overall, COVID-19 has **doubled the workload of feminist and local NGOs** in the area of gender-based violence.

Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence NGO (Beautiful Hearts) focuses on child sexual abuse and young survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence through core activities in social media, activism, and trauma-informed psychosocial services. As they shared *"We used to receive an urgent message from a survivor once a week through our social media page. Since the lockdown started, messages have increased sharply to almost every day from young women and girls."*

Care responsibility and mental health issues rest on women's shoulders, while collective movements have been interrupted entirely by government measures associated with pandemic. **Local grassroots groups remain positive and resistant to change** in this new normality and they remain focused on **fixing the current system of gender inequality rather than waiting for the pandemic to end**.

For the full article by Saranzaya visit the [LINK](#)



SUSTAINING OUR DALIT WOMEN LEADERS

INTERVIEW WITH RIYA SINGH FROM DALIT WOMENS FIGHT, INDIA

Dalit Women Fight is India's single & largest dalit women-led collective. We work in six states of northern India. Our core work areas are a) access to justice to the survivors of caste atrocity, primarily dalit women, b) Promoting & facilitating young dalit women leadership, and c) dalit women & local governance.

Covid 19 has made it difficult to reach out to survivors physically and assist them in going to the police station to file a complaint. In several cases of rape & gang rape, the medical tests were postponed since hospitals were a hub of viruses & infections. Atrocities did not stop even when the whole nation was under lockdown, however the state used this excuse when it came to taking action & providing protections to survivors. The most basic legal process that is required to file an atrocity is already tough in a non-pandemic state; it became tougher during the pandemic.'

To read the full interview with Riya by Gopika Bashi visit the [LINK](#)



THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN AFRICA

ESSI GERALDO, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, TOGO

Digital has played a big role in the fight against the pandemic. Rebecca Taboukouna, a young web developer and graphic designer, co-founder of a Startup in E-Health and passionate about new technologies, recognised the need for making digital available and accessible. A new tele-medicine app was developed for health advice, for making appointments with doctors, for referral to specialist doctors, assistance to those more vulnerable, and discussions with doctors by messages, calls, or audio. She also added articles, advice and guidance through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many other people are still acting in the shadows to face this pandemic. Many of them hidden within associations and institutions not wanting to show themselves off.

For the full article by Essi visit the [LINK](#)



IMPACTS OF COVID, AND HOW YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVISM HAS SHIFTED IN BARBADOS/ THE CARIBBEAN

INTERVIEW WITH GABRIELLE BAILEY, BARBADOS

When you think about the Caribbean context and Covid, it is important to remember that the Caribbean is very tourism-dependent. If it's one thing that has been completely obliterated by Covid, it is travel. This means that within these small Caribbean economies, with already limited resources, those resources have quickly dissipated, as thousands of people have lost jobs and the country's entire budget has suffered. What this has meant is that groups have had to stop and take a very big step back, some persons have become burnt out and simply not been able to continue because they simply have nothing left.

THE REALITY IS THAT WHEN WE CONSIDER WHAT IS INTERESTING/ REVOLUTIONARY – PEOPLE AREN'T DOING THE MOST INTERESTING THINGS BECAUSE OF WHAT THE MOST URGENT NEEDS ARE. PERSONS ARE TRYING TO PROVIDE FOOD, ACCESS ONLINE CALLS, AND SUPPORT HYGIENIC NEEDS. IT'S A CRITICAL THING TO ENSURE WE NOTE, GOVERNMENTS WORLDWIDE HAVE BEEN CRIPPLED, AND ORGANISATIONS HAVE LITERALLY JUMPED ON THE CALL TO STAND IN THE GAP AND FILL THE VERY BASIC NEEDS. THIS HAS DEFINITELY CHALLENGED THE IDEA OF WHAT FEMINIST ORGANISING IS, TO CHANGE THE FRAME OF WHAT WE SEE AS NECESSARY WORK.

Another youth activist shared in the midst of the pandemic that "your activism isn't always picketing in the street" and that's absolutely critical to acknowledge. Activism looks so different for everyone, and sometimes we downplay the work that we're doing and/or allow others to disregard the work we do because it looks different to the way we would've hoped or what others think that we should.

CRISIS WITHIN A CRISIS: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE AND PERSISTENCE OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

AMANI ARUNI, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, OCCUPIED PALESTINE

Young women and girls are among the most vulnerable populations in the MENA region, with one in three women who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. Due to the social, political and economic complexity, they are deprived of full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms and this oppression is particularly felt in Palestine.

Firstly, Israeli occupation deprives Palestinian citizens, especially women and girls by restricting their freedoms, especially freedom of movement and limiting their access to basic services like health and education.

Much needed safe spaces are not available for young women and girls to express or to implement their activism on the ground, and the existing patriarchal legal and political system does not provide a safe environment, entrenched in the patriarchal culture of laws, regulations and policies.

Despite the challenges and limitations young women and adolescent girls face in the MENA region, they have been actively working on the frontlines in their communities. The Global Resilience Fund has revealed the passion, capacities, energies and capabilities of young women and girls in this region, by providing them with much needed space and resources to be able to initiate positive change and improve the lives of the most affected groups. The crisis pushed this marginalised, and usually unheard, segment of the population to think of new ways and approaches to address gender issues and to make their work visible. Throughout the Global Resilience Fund journey, as a panellist I have been impressed and proud when reviewing the applications for the grants.

For the full article by Amani visit the [LINK](#)



GIRLS RESPOND IN TIMES OF COVID-19

AYAT MNEINA, INTERVIEWING GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELISTS FROM TUNISIA, OCCUPIED PALESTINE AND IRAQ

Globally, COVID-19 ushered in a period of great uncertainty which took many forms in the MENA region which has historically suffered from **incompetent and unwilling, yet repressive, governance or an absence of governance at all.** As a result, the responsibility fell to communities, civil society, households, and individuals.

In Palestine, the pandemic was a crisis within a crisis - a crisis under occupation. Lockdowns and restrictions on movement predated the pandemic in Gaza, where it became a humanitarian crisis post COVID-19. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians could no longer access work. Without the critical community interventions orchestrated by civil society in response to the pandemic, many would have gone under the poverty line and unable to even provide shelter for their families.

The Fund's inclusive and accessible approach provided Sandie Hanna and her organisation, Feminist Diaries, with a chance to start her project with funding that she would normally have had to compete for against other seasoned artists through traditional avenues, like embassies, who normally fund arts and culture projects.

Women and girls in Iraq faced similar challenges. Tara Ashour, a Global Resilience Fund panelist from Iraq, describes how conflict and displaced populations meant that issues were layered; **'Not only is there no gender equality, there is also no peace.** Some of the projects we ended up funding, supported girls to get the required PPE they needed to re-start their work in the pandemic.'

Emna Mizouni, Global Resilience Fund panelist from Tunisia, said that **civil society is now being vilified with over 2,000 activists arrested since the protests in January 2021, marking the tenth anniversary of the Arab Spring.** A record number of illegal migrants are attempting the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe - over 9,000 attempted the trip in 2020 alone - more than the number combined over the last decade.

All of the panelists described how governments across the MENA region are taking advantage of the pandemic and using it as an excuse to crack down on civil freedoms. Increased surveillance and 'security' under the guise of health and safety measures infringe on human rights.

For the full article by Ayat visit the [LINK](#)



THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CONTEXT

MERCY OTEKRA, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, KENYA

After the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, governments of countries across Sub-Saharan Africa implemented total lock downs, curfews and restricted movement.

There was, and still is, the risk of encroaching on human rights in government attempts to respond to the virus and in some cases, the religious right wing even resorted to scapegoating the LGBTIQ communities as the cause for the pandemic, adding to their further stigmatisation.

GIRLS, YOUNG WOMEN, TRANSGENDER WOMEN, INTERSEX AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING YOUTH HAVE BEEN HIT DISPROPORTIONALLY HARD DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY ARE ALREADY MARGINALISED AND LIVING ON THE FRONTLINES OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF OPPRESSION.

Mandatory quarantines and stay-at-home advisories have led to unexpected consequences, including **physical, sexual, reproductive, emotional and economic violence** against young women and girls. Sex workers who have resorted to practice sex work at their residential places have further increased their vulnerability to violence through exposure to neighbours, friends, and family members who have since realised their income generating activities. With the limited public health access, or lack thereof, our communities have had to rely on the set up of alternative **community-led differentiated health care facilities**.

This has presented an opportunity to learn from the structural challenges that affected young women and girls' organising capability to withstand the effects of the crisis and they have drawn strength in planning with nascent organisations to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on their institutions and work.

For the full article by Mercy visit the [LINK](#)



THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

FATIMA KALIMA SHARES HER THOUGHTS HERE ON THE GROUPS FUNDED THROUGH THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND

COVID-19 has made things very difficult for young women living with disabilities like me. Most of them don't have any formal employment so they engage in petty business to make ends meet. FDYD gets so many calls every day from women saying they don't have enough money to buy soap or food or hand sanitiser. Any capital they had has evaporated because they have had to survive during lockdown. Most government announcements regarding preventive measures for COVID-19 have come through online, radio and social media, but the majority of women with disabilities in the countryside don't have smartphones or wifi or even electricity. **They couldn't get any first-hand information and were relying on their neighbours instead who couldn't give them reliable information.**

WHEN LOCKDOWN FINALLY CAME, THINGS GOT WORSE, BECAUSE MANY WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES HAVE OTHER ILLNESSES, SUCH AS HIV AND OTHER DISABILITY CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE MEDICAL ATTENTION.

They were meant to be getting their drugs from hospital, but they couldn't get to hospital anymore because public transportation had shut down. Many women with disabilities depend on begging and due to COVID-19 restrictions of movement, it resulted in them just being at home. Their husbands or relatives were also laid off from work due to COVID-19 and many are suffering and are lacking food.



FEMINIST FOOTBALL AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

JULIANA ROMAN LOZANO, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, ARGENTINA

For 14 years, La Nuestra Football Feminista has developed sports training and workshop spaces with a feminist perspective in the large informal settlement of Villa 31, Buenos Aires. As much an area for leisure, contention, reflection and expression, it has become a space from where to **build a language of our own**. We have characterised an identity for football played by women and non-hegemonic identities that allows for **individual and collective empowerment, motivated by the raw desire to play**.

COVID-19 revealed the deep inequities and difficult conditions that the Villa 31 community faces on a daily basis. The lack of access to health care, basic services added to historical conditions of marginality and state abandonment.

MANDATORY SOCIAL ISOLATION HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT AND PAINFUL. SO OFTEN, WOMEN, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS NOT ONLY NOW LIVE WITH THEIR AGGRESSORS BUT MUST DO SO IN CROWDED CONDITIONS AND POOR HOUSING.

Due to preventive and compulsory isolation, many of the players have been immersed and forced to re-assume more traditional roles under new family dynamics and many have expressed their anguish and sadness when experiencing this resurgence of those traditional roles that years of struggle and time on the field had helped to redress.

Through this situation, women have been the first leaders to occupy the front line of battle to face the crisis, maintaining communal cooking and eating spaces, as well as the care of children and the elderly. Many too, were the first to risk their lives, getting infected in some cases, and later dying.

For the full article by Juliana visit the [LINK](#)



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING YOUNG ACTIVISTS BUILDING RESILIENCE AND HOLDING THE LINE

In the midst of the pandemic, girls and young activists have demonstrated the transportative power of this moment to visibilise, name, challenge, and re-imagine the root causes and corrupt social contracts, structures, and policies that currently define so much of our world.

The pandemic created an opportunity to think differently and deepen their webs of solidarity and support. Crises can offer new perspectives and fresh approaches to dealing with problems and finding solutions. It brought with it the possibility for experimenting with methods and strategies, building synergies and applying innovative communication through feminist progressive discourse. The resilience and creativity of girls and young women is evident here, as even in the most difficult of circumstances, they are weathering the storm and finding ways to generate alternatives and forge feminist futures.

3. AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY

CREATING THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND

“COVID-19 HAS MADE AN ALREADY DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR MILLIONS OF GIRLS, EVEN WORSE. BUT GIRLS EVERYWHERE ARE STANDING UP AND LEADING CHANGE. THEY ARE READY FOR THE CHALLENGE. WE NEED TO LISTEN TO GIRLS AND SUPPORT GIRLS FOR THE FUTURE THEY’RE REIMAGINING.”

LAUREN RUMBLE, UNICEF

While there are no existing tables or collaboratives focused on girls and young women in emergencies or crisis situations, there are people across the funding ecosystem committed to resourcing girls and young women’s activism who recognised that something bold and propositional was required in this moment. Launched in May 2020, the Global Resilience Fund is a temporary, experimental and fast-paced fund to move flexible resources to girls and young women through the pandemic. Housed and facilitated by Purposeful, the Fund is powered by the resources and intellectual energy of 25 funders from a diverse range of institutions, including women’s funds, private foundations, INGOs, multi-laterals, and bi-lateral agencies. The Fund was born just as the realities of the pandemic were beginning to be felt in earnest around the world - an opportunity opened up to do things differently and take the kinds of collective risks we are not always primed to take in the business-as-usual world of philanthropy.

The moment was also one of chaos, for all of us. We were all experiencing very real shifts at home. Many of us were working from kitchen tables (or bathrooms, or cupboards) with children on our laps, navigating lockdowns and caregiving and crumbling health systems, all with the constant fear of sickness and death as the backdrop. Funders were trying to find ways to move resources to those most impacted by the crisis at work and in their own funder activism. Most were connecting with existing grantee partners to see what kind of support they needed, spending hours in internal conversations on how to respond to this moment, attending multiple daily calls about needs and strategies. We knew girls and young women would be the most impacted by the pandemic and at the forefront of collectivising and organising in response to the crisis. However, for many, resourcing new girl and young women-led groups was not institutionally possible, either because of a lack of capacity or the appropriate infrastructure to move resources quickly to young organisers.

THROUGH ALL OF THIS CHANGE, PARTNERSHIP WAS THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION. WHAT STARTED AS A SMALL DIALOGUE BETWEEN A FEW FEMINIST FUNDERS AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC, QUICKLY GREW INTO A FUND FUELLED BY THE RESOURCES, NETWORKS AND INTELLECTUAL POWER OF 25 ORGANISATIONS FROM A DIVERSE RANGE OF INSTITUTIONS.

The Fund provided an opportunity to do something collectively, and created space for people to be as involved, or not, as they wanted to be. For some, the ability to move resources to a fund, without having to do the heavy lift, unlocked an opportunity for them to resource this work. For others, having a space to go deep and learn, and in one case, lend a staff member to the Fund created an opportunity to transform their own grant-making. For others, it provided an opportunity to support girls and young women directly and more deeply through shared proposals and decision-making processes.

In this next section, we lift up some of the key elements that made it possible for this group to come together, quickly and effectively, to launch a fund in a matter of months and resource over 200 groups in just a 12-month period.

FERTILE GROUND

OUR FEMINIST FRIENDSHIPS MATTER

It is by no accident that *this* group of funders coalesced around *this* opportunity. All of us had existing friendships and/or working relationships that allowed us to quickly come together. Some had been organising inside and outside of philanthropy together for decades, while others had one existing relationship with someone in the Fund, and with that, many new relationships were seeded. These pre-existing relationships meant trust was built into the Fund from the start, so we could commit, share, and most importantly, get on with the task of moving resources, knowing we were starting from a basis of shared values and commitments. Importantly, so much of this trust was built on the foundations of human to human, rather than institution to institution relationships. The key takeaway? Our feminist friendships matter.

“THIS IDEA OF REALLY MOVING MONEY DIRECTLY TO GIRLS RESONATED SO STRONGLY, BASED ON THE ISSUES AND PEOPLE THAT WE CARE ABOUT AND THAT WE ARE WORKING TO SUPPORT. THAT AND THE TRACK RECORD OF OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH PURPOSEFUL, MADE IT POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT THE FUND.”

ANONYMOUS DONOR



CROSS-POLLINATION TO BUILD A DIVERSE ECOSYSTEM

WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

“WHEN WE COME TOGETHER AROUND THIS WORK, 1+1 DOESN'T EQUAL 2, IT EQUALS SO MUCH MORE. TOGETHER WE CAN LEVERAGE IMPORTANT GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER ACTORS, WITH THE AMBITION TO GET MORE FUNDING TO WOMEN AND GIRLS, TO GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS, AND IN THE CASE OF THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND, ADOLESCENT-LED ORGANISATIONS. WE KNOW THE DATA – IT'S PROVEN NOW – THESE ORGANISATIONS DO NOT RECEIVE ENOUGH VITAL FUNDING.”

VALÉRIE MEUNIER, Fondation CHANEL

Funders from across regions, sectors, movements and issues came together around a collective purpose - to resource girls and young women's organising. Because girls organise across issues, areas and movements, it was easy for many people to see the relevance of supporting girls and young women's leadership in a COVID-19 response. It is, however, a rare opportunity for people to come together across movements and sectors such as children's rights, women's rights, and disability rights and across donor types including public, private, corporate, INGOs, and multilateral funders. It is the strength drawn from this diversity that allowed for so many new possibilities, and ultimately the support of transformative work across the ecosystem.



“THERE WAS THIS ELEMENT OF WHO WAS IN THE ROOM. THE THOUGHTFULNESS AND WHO WAS ASSEMBLED TO BE IN THE FUND WAS REALLY POWERFUL. GIVEN THE UNPRECEDENTED NATURE OF THE CRISIS, WE NEEDED A DIVERSE GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED FUNDERS. EVERYBODY BROUGHT A DIFFERENT STRENGTH TO THE TABLE. IN SOME WAYS, IT WAS LIKE A COLLECTIVE FLEX – THERE IS AN UNPRECEDENTED NEED AND HERE IS HOW WE’RE GOING TO MEET IT TOGETHER.”

DIVYA SOORYAKUMAR, MADRE

“THE COLLECTIVE OF FUNDERS WAS SUCH A POWERFUL SUPPORT IN AND OF ITSELF. AND WE RARELY SEE THIS IDEA OF HAVING FUNDERS ACROSS THE GLOBE WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND APPROACHES COMING TOGETHER, LEVERAGING EACH OTHERS’ STRENGTHS TOWARD REALISING A COLLECTIVE VISION.”

SAGRI SINGH, UNICEF



“FOR US, A KEY MOTIVATION WAS KNOWING THAT IT’S NOT JUST ONE ORGANISATION, BUT MANY ORGANISATIONS COMING TOGETHER TO LAUNCH A CRISIS RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND TO SUPPORT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN.”

PAMELA AKPLOGAN, PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Fondation CHANEL and Ford Foundation commissioned research with OECD to better understand philanthropic flows targeting gender equality, women and girls, as well as an analysis of foundations’ funding allocations and approaches. The report, Insights on Philanthropy For Gender Equality, looked at data from 143 foundations that support gender equality in developing countries. In addition to looking at who is funding gender equality, the study looked at where resources are allocated. The study found that the majority of foundations support international organisations and well-known international non-governmental organisations, and very little funding is going directly to smaller frontline organisations. It also highlights that 67% of funding goes to middle income stable countries, leaving 1/3 of resources for the least developed countries. 75% of funding is siloed to health and reproductive health, with few foundations supporting integrated approaches to gender equality.

These findings have become key advocacy points for Fondation CHANEL and Ford in their work for gender equality. The Global Resilience Fund provided a concrete opportunity for them to respond to this evidence and move resources directly to girls and young women quickly during the COVID-19 crisis. As the only corporate funder in the partnership, Fondation CHANEL, which mission is to promote and support gender equality, has a unique role to play. Their example has the potential to influence the broader private sector in lifting up the voices and strategies of the young activists so often hidden from view.

“THE BEST WAY TO SUSTAIN CHANGE IN THE LONG-TERM IS TO FUND FRONTLINE ORGANISATIONS, GIRL AND WOMEN LED ORGANISATIONS, AND WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS. THEY ARE GAME CHANGERS. THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND WAS ONE WAY WE COULD ENSURE GIRL AND YOUNG WOMEN-LED ORGANISATIONS WERE RESOURCED DURING THIS CRITICAL MOMENT”.

Valérie Meunier, Fondation CHANEL

“IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE OECD REPORT THAT WE NEED BOLD NEW MODELS FOR BUILDING FORWARD AFTER COVID. THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE, USING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO GRANTMAKING WITH GIRLS, NON-BINARY YOUTH, AND YOUNG WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH. FLEXIBLE FUNDING THAT CENTERS ON POWER-BUILDING RATHER THAN TOP-DOWN SOLUTIONS IS WHERE WE MUST BE FOCUSED AS A FIELD. FORD LOOKS FORWARD TO BUILDING ON THE LESSONS OF THIS FUND TO SUPPORT AN EMERGING INFRASTRUCTURE OF WORK WITH AND FOR GIRLS.”

Judy Diers, Ford Foundation

STRONG ROOTS IN FEMINIST PRAXIS: THIS WORK IS POLITICAL

"WE WERE REALLY EXCITED ABOUT THE FEMINIST APPROACH, THE FUND WAS APPLYING AND THE ORGANISING PRINCIPLES FOR BRINGING THE COLLECTIVE OF FUNDERS TOGETHER AROUND AN INTENTIONAL PIECE OF WORK THAT PARTNERS, AMPLIFIES AND SUPPORTS GIRLS. A FUND THAT OPERATIONALISES THIS IDEA OF WITH AND FOR GIRLS. IT WAS A CONCRETE OPERATIONALISATION OF A FEMINIST APPROACH IN TERMS OF HOW CAN WE ENGAGE WITH GIRLS."

SAGRI SINGH, UNICEF

The Fund is led by strong feminist values, in who it reaches, how it resources activists, how it approaches monitoring and learning, and these values also extend to the Fund's approach to partnership and collaboration. Even with fertile ground for trust to build on, it was important to create an intentional and transparent process that would seed and strengthen the relationships in the Fund. Grounded in a **feminist power analysis** that recognises and pays attention to power differentials, the Fund creates space to build collaboration and avoid competition, allowing partners to move beyond organisational priorities towards a shared vision.

"IT WAS POWERFUL TO BRING TOGETHER DIFFERENT KINDS OF PARTNERS, AND HAVE LEARNING DIALOGUES AS THE FUND WAS UNFOLDING. AND TO NOT HAVE IT BE JUST WITH PRIVATE FUNDERS, OR JUST WITH GIRLS, BUT THAT THERE WAS A CROSS-DIALOGUE THAT HAPPENED AND SPACE FOR CROSS-FERTILISATION AMONG DIFFERENT KINDS OF GROUPS. ALSO, EXPLICITLY CALLING OUT THAT THERE WERE POWER DYNAMICS THAT PEOPLE NEEDED TO BE AWARE OF WAS REALLY HELPFUL."

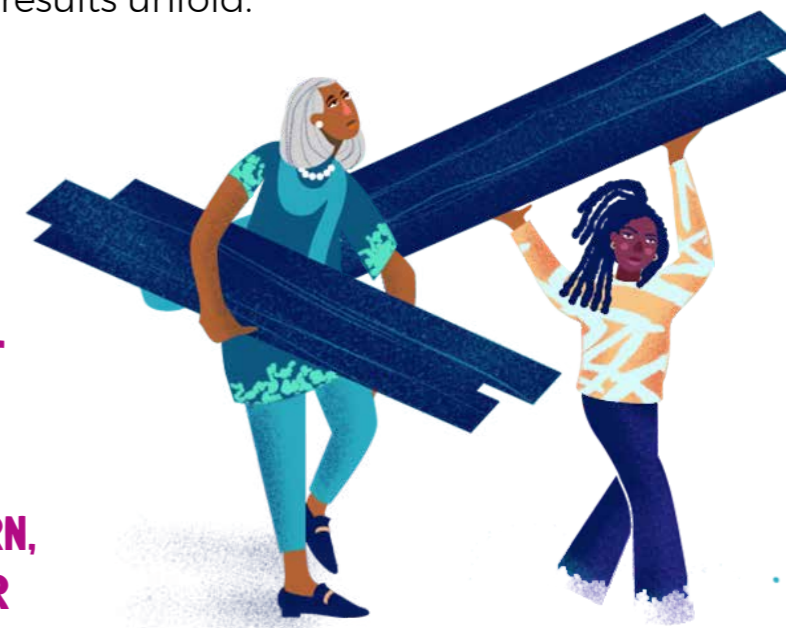
SARAH ROMA, INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT



Practically, this meant building transparent processes from the start, with open access to budgets, sharing partner applications, and holding collective learning spaces. It meant ongoing information sharing and regular emails and calls to provide updates on the Fund, allowing people to be as engaged as their individual capacity allowed. There is a deep ethos of **reciprocity and collaboration**, where everyone's unique contribution is equally valued. From the start, non-financial contributions were treated as equally as important as financial resources. Partners have nurtured the Fund in multiple ways: leading fundraising and philanthropic outreach; with human capacity; translation support; outreach into key regions, movements and populations; co-designing learning and application processes, and so much more. To ensure the Fund had the technical capacity to be inclusive of disability rights, it also included a non-funder technical partner, *Women Enabled International*. This kind of collaboration made so much more possible, and we're continuing to see the results unfold.

"AS AN NGO RATHER THAN FUNDING PARTNER, WE WERE WELCOMED AND TREATED AS EQUAL PARTNERS. THE FUND TRULY VALUED THE DISTINCT EXPERTISE DIFFERENT PARTNERS BROUGHT TO THE COLLABORATION, AND, IN TURN, PAVED THE WAY FOR GREATER ACCESS TO THE FUND BY GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES-LED ORGANIZATIONS, WHO FREQUENTLY FACE INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIERS TO TRADITIONAL FUNDING MECHANISMS."

SUZANNAH PHILLIPS, WOMEN ENABLED INTERNATIONAL



"THE FEMINIST APPROACH WAS IMPORTANT TO US, IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE FUNDS WOULD BE ADMINISTERED AND RUN BY A FEMINIST ORGANISATION AND THE FUNDS WILL BE DIRECTLY GOING INTO THE HANDS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN."

PAMELA AKPLOGAN, PLAN INTERNATIONAL

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO FUNDING BARRIERS: THIS WORK MUST BE DONE DIFFERENTLY

"THIS MOMENT CALLED ON ALL OF US TO BE MORE INNOVATIVE, UNDERSTAND HOW WE COULD RESOURCE GIRLS COLLECTIVELY, AND FIGURE OUT HOW WE CAN RESPOND TO AN UNFOLDING CRISIS THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE. THERE WAS AN UNPRECEDENTED SET OF CHALLENGES AND CIRCUMSTANCES MAKING GIRLS VULNERABLE AND IN NEED OF FUNDING. IT WAS ONLY THROUGH WORKING COLLECTIVELY THAT WE COULD ACHIEVE THOSE GOALS!"

NATALIA CARUSO, MADRE



The FRIDA and Mama Cash Report 'Girls to the Front'¹³ brings to life the realities of girl-led organising, lifting up how and why girl-led groups remain unregistered for long periods of time, some even permanently. For some, it is a conscious decision driven by the group's guiding principles; for others, independence brings no added benefits.' Many groups do not have access to bank accounts or fiscal sponsors to receive large sums of money. Most funders have due diligence requirements or other funding restrictions that limit their capacity to fund these groups directly, and many do not have the infrastructure to make relatively small grants and at the speed that is required in an emergency.

Purposeful - a feminist hub for girls organising - was created in response to the needs of girls during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone. In their global practice, the organisation draws on experience in centering girls in crisis response, using flexible and trust-based funding mechanisms to move money in non traditional ways. With Purposeful providing the platform, there was space to build a funding container that could meet the very specific needs of girls and young women during the pandemic.

"WE WERE RECOGNISING HOW MANY CHALLENGES THE GIRL AND YOUTH GROUPS WE WORK WITH WERE FACING, AND HOW MANY WERE RESPONDING AND WERE REALLY ON THE FRONTLINE OF RESPONSE. MANY WERE STRUGGLING TO JUST SURVIVE, BECAUSE OF THE CRISIS, BECAUSE THEY WERE STRUGGLING TO ORGANISE, BECAUSE THEY HAD DIFFERENT CARE RESPONSIBILITIES. THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND WAS A WAY WE COULD MOVE RESOURCES REALLY QUICKLY TO THESE GROUPS ON THE FRONTLINES. AND WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN FROM IT IN WAYS THAT WILL TRANSFORM OUR OWN GRANT-MAKING."

GEORGIA BOOTH, PLAN INTERNATIONAL



"WHILE WE WERE TALKING ABOUT HAVING GIRLS VOICES FRONT AND CENTRE, AND WE KNEW WHAT THE DATA WAS SAYING, THERE WAS REALLY NO MECHANISM TO AMPLIFY AND PARTNER WITH GIRLS AND REALLY SUPPORT THIS APPROACH WITH RESOURCES. ONE REASON UNICEF WAS EXCITED TO JOIN WAS THE CAPACITY, SKILLS, AND MECHANISM TO 'WALK THE TALK' OF PARTNERING WITH GIRLS AND AMPLIFYING THEIR VOICES AND SOLUTIONS."

SAGRI SINGH, UNICEF

The Fund offers an example of how it is possible to shift power at relative speed and scale - showing the many ways in which philanthropy can respond with the care, agility and pace movements so desperately needed in this moment. This Fund lays the groundwork for funders to build their risk tolerance and understand new and creative ways to resource girls that meet the needs of their organising. It also demonstrates the importance of collaborating and working together towards a common goal.

AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MOVING MONEY: NO SINGLE FUND CAN DO IT ALONE

“THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND WAS A MUCH-NEEDED OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM AND UPLIFT A DIVERSE GROUP OF FUNDERS’ EXPERTISE AND STRENGTHS TO KEEP OUR FOCUS STEADY ON MOVING RESOURCES DIRECTLY TO GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN DURING THE PANDEMIC. THE WORLDWIDE EMERGENCY OF COVID-19 MEANS THAT WE ARE ALL CRISIS FUNDERS, AND THE FUND HAS ENABLED US TO RESPOND IN WAYS THAT ARE RAPID, PARTICIPATORY, AND INTERSECTIONAL. THROUGH THIS COLLECTIVE, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO URGENTLY MEET NEEDS USING A CONTEXTUALISED AND NUANCED APPROACH TO FUNDING GIRLS ACROSS THE WORLD.”

YIFAT SUSSKIND, MADRE

Many of the funders in the partnership have gone on to support groups selected through the participatory process directly, leveraging more funding for young feminists throughout the process. Through this flexible approach, funders were also able to learn about work in their region or the issue area they focused on, without having to do a funding call themselves. This approach also made space for the national and regional funds who are already set up well to support grassroots groups, and for whom it didn’t make sense to move money out of their region and then back again. This way of working is rooted in principles of reciprocity and cooperation - working together in the service of the movements we are accountable to, rather than individual institutional priorities.

“AT GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN, WE BELIEVE IN A CORE PRACTICE OF WOMEN’S FUNDS: THE POWER OF REDISTRIBUTING RESOURCES AND PUTTING THEM DIRECTLY IN THE HANDS OF FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS AND MOVEMENTS.”

LATANYA MAPP FRETT, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN.



A number of women’s funds collaborated with the fund in different ways, some putting resources into the pot redistributed by Purposeful, such as Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash, and others granting directly to groups selected through the participatory process. 29 additional groups were funded by Central American Women’s Fund, ELAS, Semillas, Global Fund for Women and Women Win. Women’s Funds have played a key role in sharing their expertise, supporting the Fund to select panelists, design and give critical feedback on the grantmaking model, and amplify the call for proposals. The varied ways in which women’s funds are part of this fund demonstrate the value of flexibility and the power and necessity to work with and nourish the existing funding architecture. Many Women’s Funds have activated emergency response grant mechanisms during the pandemic that have been complementary and enabled shared learning with the Global Resilience Fund. Women’s Funds continue to be critical leaders in moving resources to unregistered and grassroots groups and movements.

THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FLEXIBLE SUPPORT MERGED PERFECTLY WITH ELAS’ FLEXIBLE GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS, ENABLING MORE GROUPS LED BY GIRLS, TRANS, AND YOUNG WOMEN TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND JOIN A NETWORK OF 59 ORGANIZATIONS, ALSO INTEGRATING CAPACITY AND MOVEMENT BUILDING SPACES.”

SAVANA BRITO,
ELAS PROGRAM MANAGER



LATINA'S COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

PERLA SOFÍA VAZQUEZ DÍAZ – BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH FIMI, SEMILLAS, FCAM, MAMA CASH AND WOMEN WIN.

All of us, from our individual or collective revolution, began to join caring and supportive efforts. From this collective solidarity, women's funds began to build support, survival, and resilience strategies to be able to transform the chaos that they left us with, that they caused us, to resist, to survive.

Collective money to resist, and of course we joined this invitation that echoed hope and solidarity. Together we echoed;

“we support their revolution”
“let's be supportive”
“let's be collective”
“let's be flexible”
“let them decide”.

FCAM, Semillas Fund, CAMY Fund, IMF, and Ellas Fund joined from Latin America, “from an organic point of view, without knowing much about how to collaborate.

Some of us already knew how to respond because we had lived through other crises, but we knew that we should build from another place, because past crises had led us to overload our teams, “had led us to a burnout”. In May 2019, we began to meet up to figure out the practice of our solidarity.

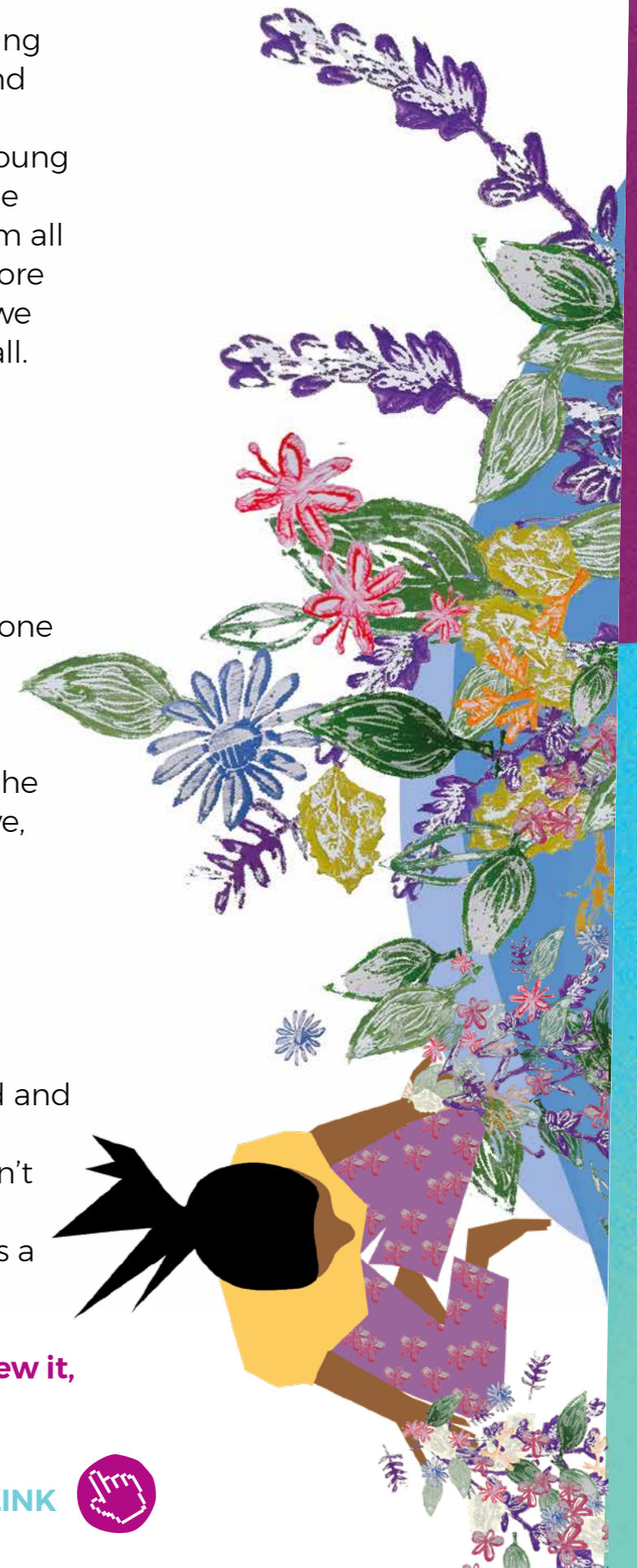
We reviewed numbers.
We reviewed tables.
We built dialogues.
We added.
We subtracted.
We adjusted or removed our bureaucracy.
We recognised that we did not have much money.
We managed more money.
We let others do.
We trusted young activists.

We were able to delegate to young activists, the decision-making and the power to prioritise groups of feminist girls, adolescents and young women who were reacting to the emergency. They responded from all corners of Latin America with more than a hundred proposals, and we were not able to support them all. We supported one round, two rounds, three rounds.

46 dreams,
46 revolutions,
46 resistances.
And it hurt us.
The pandemic reached us all in one way or the other.
We realised that we were all overwhelmed.
Young activists, adults, those in the middle, those below, those above,
Sore,
In duel,
In chinga.
We said goodbye to others,
We all suffered from anxiety, depression.
In some places, hunger returned and settled.
We felt, we thought, and we didn't stop thinking.
Collective care was urgent, it was a debt, it was water, it was life.

The girls, the young women knew it, and others reminded us.

For Perla's full article visit the [LINK](#)



A TRULY INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH: ONLY TOGETHER DOES THIS BECOME REALITY

The participation and leadership across such a diversity of funder and non-funder activists, deepened and strengthened the political analysis held through the process, including its ability to be more deeply intersectional. Funders and activist advisors challenged all aspects of the process, from decision-making pathways to which questions were asked in the proposals, to how those proposals were scored, making the process stronger and more inclusive. One breakthrough of the fund was its ability to reach an unprecedented number of disability rights group by being intentionally inclusive from the beginning.



CASE STUDY UNLOCKING THE INCLUSION OF DISABILITY RIGHTS

Girls with disabilities are often excluded from funding calls or priorities of any sort, including across the broader girls and women's rights field. After an invitation from the Ford Foundation to consider how we could centre Disability Rights as we built the platform in its early days, the Global Resilience Fund has funded an unprecedented number of disability rights activists/ groups led by girls and young women with disabilities.

This breakthrough was made possible because of the expertise and intellectual generosity of the Disability Rights Fund and Women Enabled International, Ford Foundation resources, and the Purposeful teams' understanding of the importance of inclusion together with their willingness to learn and adapt. Most critically, two disability rights activists serve as fund advisors. Their leadership on the panels resulted in a more inclusive call for proposals and decision-making process.

"IN JUST 10 MONTHS, THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND TRANSFORMED ITS WORK TO BE INCLUSIVE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. IT HAS TAKEN 10 YEARS AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS TO DO THIS. I DON'T KNOW HOW AND WHY. BUT THAT'S THE TRUTH."

CATHERINE HYDE TOWNSEND, SENIOR ADVISOR, DISABILITY RIGHTS, FORD FOUNDATION



1. THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES ALSO CREATES UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES

What other women and girls are experiencing during COVID-19, women and girls with disabilities are experiencing too, but in more complex and deeper ways - whether that's lack of access to SRHR or GBV services, humanitarian relief, or social protection measures. At the same time, activists are showing extraordinary resilience and instead of shutting down, are finding other ways to do the work. In some cases, the necessity of remote meetings has helped to level the playing field. All of the budgetary and access barriers to participating in regional and international spaces are no longer as acute, and there are opportunities for new models of engagement that have the potential to be more inclusive.

2. IN ORDER TO BE INCLUSIVE WE MUST CENTRE DISABILITY RIGHTS FROM THE BEGINNING

"For me, the best lesson from the Global Resilience Fund was that a new initiative provides the opportunity to be inclusive from the start. We were not trying to retrofit girls with disabilities into an existing program. They were centered from the start. What if this is how we were to build forward (because we are not going back) after the pandemic - with disability justice at the forefront?"

Judy Diers, Ford Foundation

Most of the time, disability is an add on. Funds are launched and programmes designed before any consideration is given to inclusivity. Disability inclusion is not mainstreamed into core budgets, meaning new resources are often required to do the work. Because we included thought partners who centered disability and disability rights activists, the Fund began considering inclusion from the beginning - and soon discovered that this need not always be a labour or budget intensive process. Simple cost-free solves like having applications downloadable as word documents rather than PDF or including small additional stipends to cover sign-language translations for advisors opened up a range of possibilities for disability rights activists. Ultimately, it was easier, quicker and cheaper for the Fund to lower barriers because this happened from day one of design. Whilst it's important not to invisibilise the human and capital cost of doing this work, we also shouldn't use resources as an excuse not to jump in and try.

"I liked the way you worked with people with disabilities to make the selection, there is a slogan we always use, nothing about us without us, and girls with disabilities. Most of the time persons with disabilities are the first people to know how we can really solve these challenges, which facilities that they need etc. I loved the way you involved people with disabilities from the beginning, and I love the way they are not left behind. The way you brought in a sign language interpreter for Maselina, and she was comfortable, and even I was comfortable, so it shows that where there is facilitation, anything can be done.

I also loved the way you were friendly, if there was a thing you could do to make it more accessible, and you kept checking on us. Flexibility, representation and remembering that people with disabilities cannot be left behind, and to remember the facilities that they needed all of this enabling the person with disabilities to fully and meaningfully engage in this process."

Anisie Byukusenge, Global Resilience Fund Panelist

3. TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIPS ALLOW FOR VULNERABILITY, MISTAKES AND ULTIMATELY TRANSFORMATIONS

People and institutions hold a deep fear of saying the wrong thing and making mistakes. This holds people back from being inclusive - that is the mistake. The leadership of the Fund let go of fear and found there are simple things you can do that can increase inclusivity. Being in a trust based relationship with other funders and organisations creates space to be vulnerable and to say "I don't know how to do this" and ask for help, and offers an invitation for those with deep expertise to accompany the process and shape the work.

"I FELT SAFE ENOUGH TO SAY - I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO THIS, I NEED SOME HELP. NONE OF YOU MADE US FEEL JUDGED FOR WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW, YOU JUST APPRECIATED THAT WE WERE TRYING AND YOU WERE BY OUR SIDE. EVEN SIMPLE STUFF LIKE THE SUPPORT ON THE WEBSITE AND MAKING DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBLE. IT FELT LIKE A SAFE ENOUGH SPACE TO SAY 'LETS TRY THIS, BUT CAN YOU DO THIS WITH US?'. AND SPACE TO MAKE MISTAKES AND NOT USE THE RIGHT LANGUAGE AND THAT BE OKAY. I THINK IT'S A TESTAMENT TO WHAT IT MEANS TO BUILD A PHILANTHROPIC FIELD THAT IS TRULY FEMINIST"

ROSA BRANSKY, CO-CEO, PURPOSEFUL

Wahana Keluarga Cerebral Palsy Youth (WKCP Youth).



4. INCLUSIVITY IN DESIGN AND DECISION-MAKING RESULTS IN MORE INTERSECTIONAL GRANTMAKING AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM ALL OF OUR WORK

“The ask to be at funder tables like this is fairly unusual and welcoming in a way that isn’t seen. If we are asked and we can, we are happy to figure out ways to help to make something more inclusive, but too often we’re not asked.”

Diana Samarasan, Disability Rights Fund

Because the core Fund included donor partners with experience in funding disability rights, a non-profit focused on disability rights and two disability rights activists on the panel, many aspects of the process were more inclusive that would otherwise have been the case. The young panelists played a critical role in decision-making and were able to draw on their knowledge and lived experience on the disability rights movement and other movements. Girls and young women with disabilities are organising across a range of issue areas and movements. Centering them in funding strategies is an opportunity to expand the range of movements we are all reaching, whilst also promoting more inclusive and intersectional approaches across movements. Ultimately, centering inclusion in one part of our work transforms all of our funding practices and programming. As a result of the Fund, Purposeful is launching a new funding window in its core grant-making for girls with disabilities and centering inclusion across its direct programmes.

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

A NEW KIND OF HUMANITARIANISM IS POSSIBLE

Girls and young activists are advocating for gender rights and social justice in every single crisis situation globally - from pandemics to civil war to ecological breakdown. And yet, girls and young women remain absent from national recovery response efforts and are frequently under-represented in decision-making structures.¹⁴ The humanitarian sector is divided by siloes that are focused on immediate response needs and are often incredibly top-down in their approach, leaving little room for any community based work and much less work led by girls, trans youth and young women. Further, traditional humanitarian response efforts often fail to reach adolescent girls and young women in their response efforts and invisibilise the incredible work that girls and women are doing during crises. VOICE recently conducted its feminist assessment of humanitarian aid¹⁵ through interviewing 200 individuals and organisations they found contributing to the humanitarian aid sector. In spite of commitments to crisis-affected populations, they were denying women and girls their rights to participation, consultation, and services, and in some cases, subjecting them to its own types of violence.

Against this backdrop, the Global Resilience Fund demonstrates that a new kind of humanitarian response is possible.

“THERE ARE VERY REAL OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF GETTING FUNDS TO GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN CERTAIN REGIONS, ESPECIALLY DURING A CRISIS, DUE TO SANCTIONS AND OTHER BARRIERS. BY HAVING A LARGE NETWORK OF FUNDERS, WE COULD ALL PUT OUR MINDS TOGETHER TO THINK HOW TO GET FUNDS INTO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM WHERE THERE ARE JUST A LOT MORE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING FUNDS. THIS FUND ALLOWS US TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WE MIGHT NEED TO SEED OR SPARK TO RESPOND TO A FUTURE CRISIS, AND NOT BE BOUND BY EXISTING HUMANITARIAN INFRASTRUCTURE.”

DIVYA SOORYAKUMAR, MADRE

4. MOVING THE MONEY

WHO AND HOW WE FUND

Built for purpose, the Fund model was designed to be clear and adaptive, centering accessibility and guided by principles of trust-based philanthropy. By learning and adapting as we went, we built a model that aligned to both political commitments and practical needs. At the heart of the Fund is a participatory decision-making model with a **panel** of girls and young activists from 32 countries playing a central role across design and decision-making moments. The model draws on Purposeful's experience in Sierra Leone and the With and For Girls Fund, as well as, the insights of other participatory and rapid response grant makers such as UHAI, FCAM, Red Umbrella Fund and FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund and Urgent Action Fund Asia Pacific.¹⁶

Recommendations from peer funders and movement actors in and beyond the Global Resilience Fund community, enabled rapid recruitment of panelists and deeper pathways for outreach. Rather than traditional approaches to due diligence and conflict of interest, activists and funders were invited to live into their deep knowledge, expertise and relationships across movements and communities, so that the Fund could truly become a home - even if just for a moment - for girls and young women organising through the pandemic. Through this next section of the report we share a snapshot of groups resourced through this process, offering insights into the 'who' and 'how' of moving money, and key lessons for others interested in centering a participatory approach in their grant-making.



SUB SAHARAN AFRICA • ASIA/PACIFIC • EUROPE/CENTRAL ASIA
AMERICAS/CARIBBEAN • MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA

ROUND 1

MAY TO AUGUST 2020

Open call for proposals

Open to groups led by girls, young women, trans, and intersex leadership under 30 years-old.



Total Applications Received

1240

Total Groups Funded

234

ROUND 2

AUGUST TO OCTOBER 2020

Open call for proposals continues



ROUND 3

SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020

Regional panels assess gaps and draw on existing application pool and new organisations by invitation.



ROUND 4

TO TAKE PLACE IN 2021

Focus on supporting existing grantees with flexible funding for joint collaborations, advocacy, collective care and to leverage new resources.



THE FUND IN A SNAPSHOT!



STAGE 1



Creation of regional panels:
32 activists from across
the world

STAGE 2



Call for proposals in
French, English, Spanish,
Portuguese and Arabic!

STAGE 3



Staff review and filter
applications to ensure
the fit

STAGE 4



Panelists receive 20-25
applications to review and
score. They have declared
any conflict of interest prior
to this stage

STAGE 8



Groups are notified that
they received grants
and grants are paid

STAGE 7



Final due diligence is
done and Purposeful
signs off the docket
of grants

STAGE 6



Regional panels are
held to form final
decisions, with the
scores as a guide, using
consensus models, and
ensuring regional and
movement diversity

STAGE 5



Staff tabulate scores
and begin to collect
references/due
diligence process

GROUPS FUNDED GLOBALLY

91 COUNTRIES



1240

APPLICATIONS



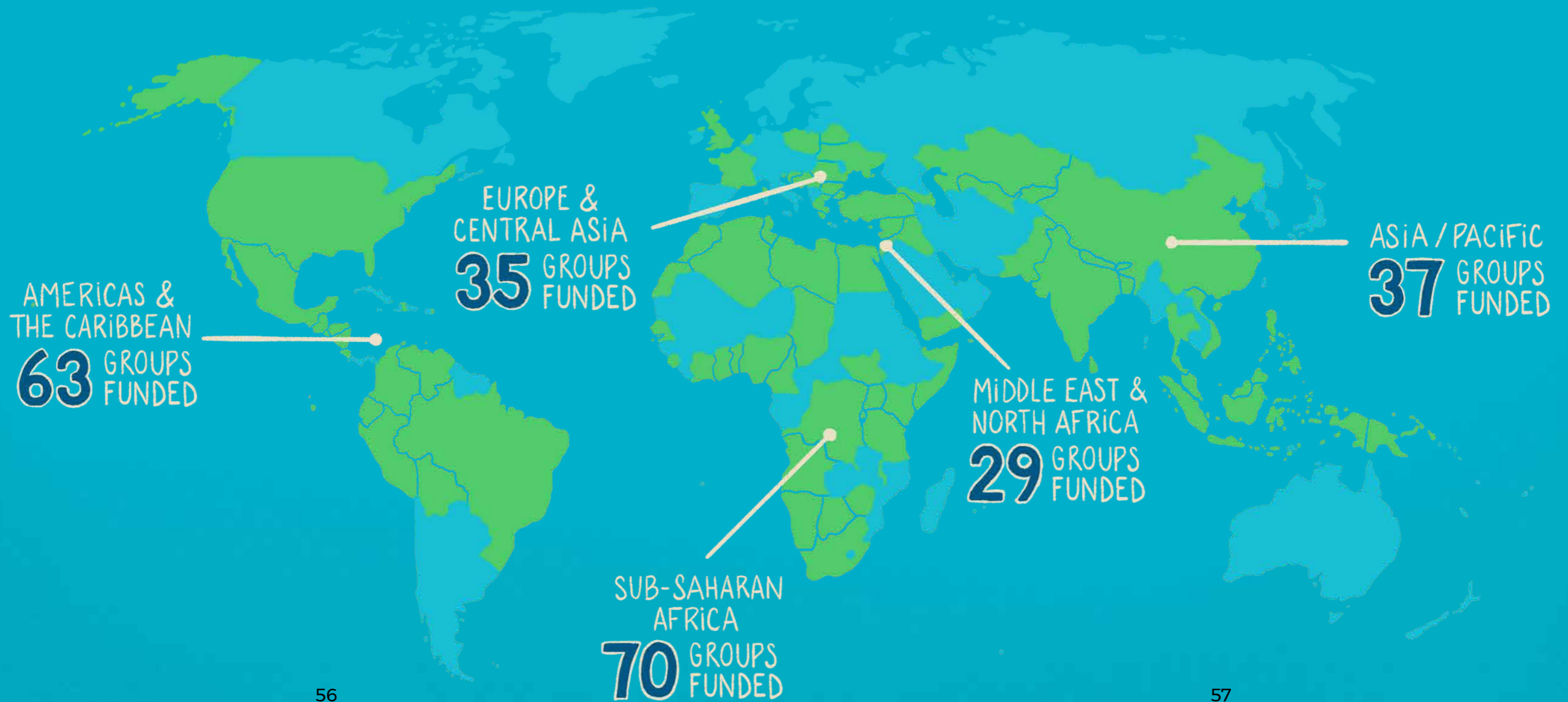
234

GROUPS FUNDED



1,031,560

TOTAL AMOUNT (USD)





SPOTLIGHT ON RADICALISING OUR PRACTICE

REFLECTIONS FROM RUBY JOHNSON



The Global Resilience Fund participatory model was the first grant-making model where I got to roll my sleeves up and co-create with the Purposeful team since I left FRIDA at the end of 2019. It felt really exciting to be able to take what I had learned and put it into practice in imagining an emergent and fast-paced participatory model. Together, we worked to assemble an inclusive and representative dream team of activists, drawing on the tools from other models and experimenting and learning as we went. We played in the liminal space between participatory models - which I knew to be quite lengthy for good reason - and rapid grant-making - which I knew to be just that, rapid!

At times it felt like extreme grant-making. We would receive the scoring results from the panelists one day and just 12-24 hours later we would schedule panels with them to deliberate and select the final groups. This meant that as numbers were rolling in, the Purposeful team were running the funding figures in real time and sending onto groups just an hour before the call. Working across time zones was a little wild, waking up and hoping the scores were crunched so I could make sure we had them ready for the panels that day! Even the methodology for the first calls was, quite honestly, on-the-fly - something Rosa, Boikanyo, the team and I were developing in motion. We tested and tried out as we went. Each region needed different approaches due to the diversity of strategies and applications received - the spirit was alive. It felt important to move and flow with the process, knowing

that these groups urgently needed this funding and we could move it quickly, but only if we did not let our fear of failure or need for process perfection get in the way. **It was fast-paced, but paved with trust and guided by intentions to meet the needs of movements in the moment, anchored by our collective feminist politics.** We took comfort in the fact that if we made mistakes we could iterate and work to address them in the next round. We openly said it was experimental, and this was the spirit in which people trusted us as we co-created and built as we went.

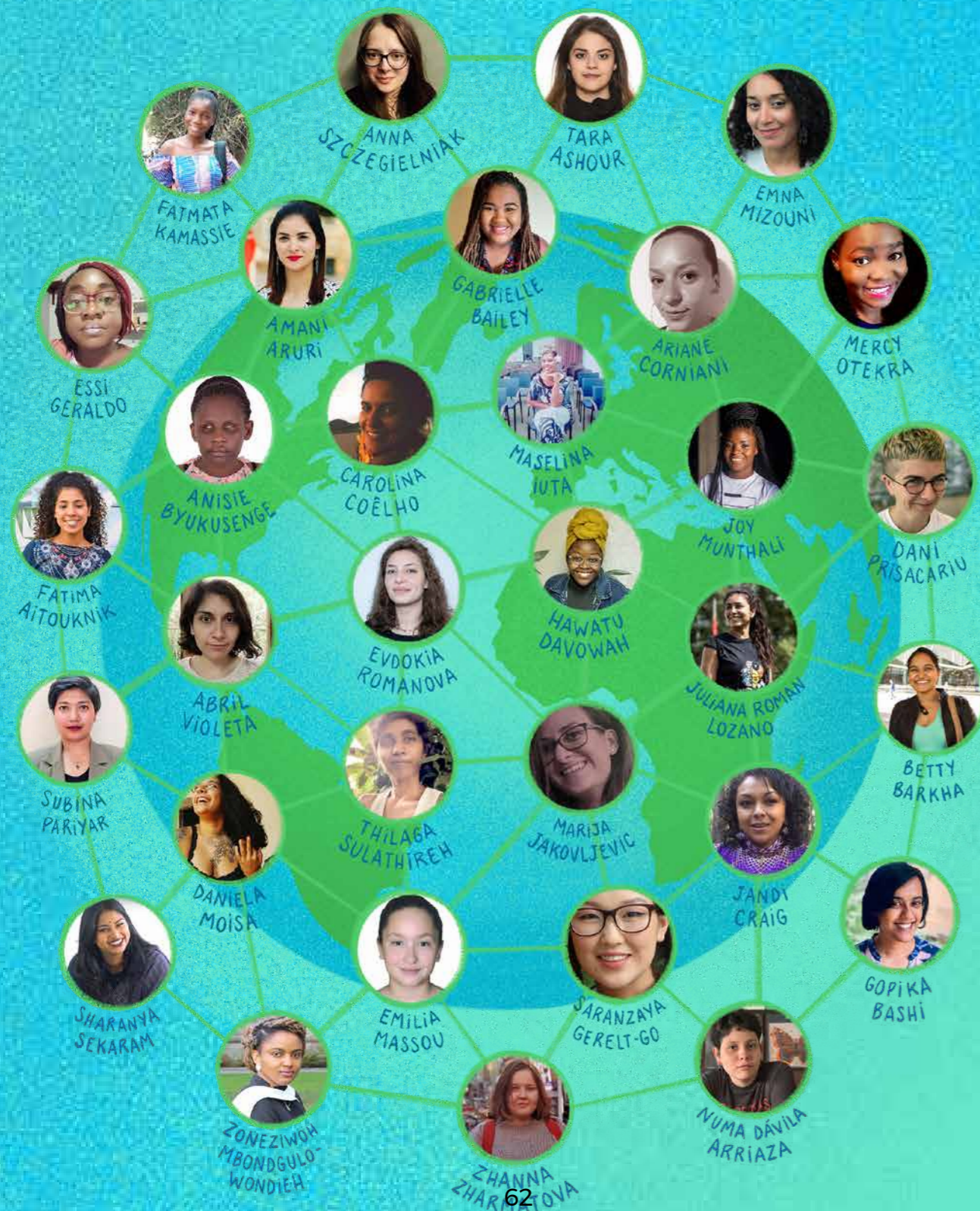
This process really affirmed to me the value of going beyond the scores and individual deliberation to robust, collective, political discussion. I have been part of a number of participatory models where we sent reviewers our scores and the team then figured out the rest. What I loved about this model were the panels where we came together - us holding space and the activists as decision-makers. The analysis was political and went beyond the numbers, guided by sub-regional and movement representation, checking that groups were funded from all movements, from indigenous people to those focused on disability rights, and that resources were also reaching girl-led groups. It was a political and robust discussion of historic and present marginalisation and oppression - from ageism, to caste, to language justice - and how that shows up in movements and in access to resources.

At the heart of the process were the bonds that were deepened throughout. People felt unified by a purpose to move resources, and everyone had their part. At the peak of the pandemic for many, these panels - the reflection of learning after each call, and the points of joy and celebration - were grounding, almost like a life raft for many. I think a sense of intuition really came into play for many in this Fund, trusting each other and finding a way to make it work.

Community informed and data driven, the Fund drew on the expertise and navigation of activists embedded in diverse movements, who formed the regional panels, and also on analysis after each grant-making round. Liesel crunched hard data on application trends to guide further outreach and redesign - both enabled more precision and responsiveness. From these seeds of experimentation other funders have already **leveraged learning** and experimented further with this model - Women Win and their Onside Fund is an example.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

MEET THE ACTIVIST PANEL!



The Global Resilience Fund panelists continue to have a deep engagement in the Fund, connecting with grantee partners on learning calls, supporting real time improvements to the grant-making model, and designing plans for accompaniment in 2021. Below, some panelists have shared their experiences on the process and the participatory model:

PAIN & JOY OF PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

MARIJA JAKOVLJEVIC, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, SERBIA

The Global Resilience Fund recognised the importance of timely support to girls and young women and created space for **experimental learning by doing**.

We've realised that no matter how flexible the guidelines are, **the reality is fluid and refuses to fit into any box**. It would be superficial to run never-ending checklists of identities and issues we want to support. It's the substance that matters. We've learned quickly that there is more than meets the eye, and applications can't be our only source of information. We engaged our colleagues and contacts from as many fields as possible to provide a more nuanced view from the local context. While we all live in a system that oppresses us, the forms and methods of oppression vary.

Our responses and the alternatives we are developing should not be forced to fit a pre-set criteria of people behind computers. **It wasn't just an exchange of knowledge, it was also an exchange of emotions**. I was so grateful to be in a group of people devoted to being accountable and fair. However, our understanding of it sometimes was different, and it took a lot of discussion, energy and effort to see the other perspective and jointly find a way to do no harm with our preconceptions. **It can be messy and painful, but I'd prefer that than some generic perfect-looking self-celebratory shallow setting because people put their hearts and knowledge to serve the diverse movement**.

For Marija's full article visit the [LINK](#)



THE VALUE OF TRUSTING THE EXPERTISE AND SELF-DETERMINATION OF GROUPS

DANI PRISACARIU, GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND PANELIST, ROMANIA

One of the most interesting aspects of being part of the advisory group for the Global Resilience Fund was **getting to understand local realities of young feminists and their efforts to address the issues they face**. We had to ask ourselves, amongst all these amazing projects and groups, which ones should we prioritise?

In the end, I realise that some things often requested in projects are not really as important as building trust that grassroots groups know best how to use funded resources. One of these things is knowing in detail what they will do with the funding - too much detail forces groups to future-write something that needs to unfold as they start working on it. Another one is innovation - even though it is seen as desirable, sometimes, especially in unprecedented times such as COVID-19, this should not be mandatory.

For the sake of innovation, many funders push organisations towards unsustainable approaches, always coming up with something new even though the need requires tested ways of working.

All these being said, I'd like to conclude by saying that the feeling I got from these processes was that relationships matter, and that for me, feminist philanthropy prioritises getting to know and understanding groups and contexts, and developing a trust-based connection that lasts over time.

For Dani's full article visit the [LINK](#)



"THE MODEL OF THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND CHALLENGED THE CRISIS OF FUNDING BY CAPITALIST FEMINISM, AND OFFERED EMERGENCY GRANTS THAT ARE FLEXIBLY DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES SET BY GRANTEE GROUPS – AN INTENTIONAL LIBERATION APPROACH THAT IS SETTING AN EXAMPLE."

SANDIE HANNA, GRANTEE PARTNER, OCCUPIED PALESTINE

For Sandie Hanna's full article visit the [LINK](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON MOVING MONEY TO THE MARGINS

A CONVERSATION WITH PURPOSEFUL'S FINANCE DIRECTOR

Annemarieke Murthi reflects below on how Purposeful moves money in non-traditional ways, whilst remaining compliant with its obligations as a registered charity. Her experience illustrates the value in hiring feminist finance teams and ensuring operations staff are connected to the purpose of the work. None of this work is functional, all of our decisions as grant-makers are political. Meeting groups where they are, beginning with an awareness of power dynamics and questioning our everyday practices are all critical to moving money to the margins.

X **As a field we need to get out of our heads and go back to basics.** For this Fund, we used Western Union, Paypal, registered banking platforms and a range of agents to move money to unregistered collectives. If groups didn't have bank accounts, we engaged in dialogue and then made sure there was documentation to give us the assurance that they trusted the people they were passing money through. We moved money through multiple channels to make sure it could get to where it needed to go. We didn't let something as simple as not having a bank account become the reason why a group couldn't receive funding.

X **So much of this is about trust.** If you think about this from a finance and risk perspective, the good thing about this Fund is that many of the groups supported had already been funded by partners, or were in relationship with panelists, which cut down the due diligence process extensively. This means you automatically start from a position of trust, which is great. At Purposeful, we're all really driven to get resources to girls that makes it easier for me to stop thinking about why we can't, and to think instead about how we can.

X **It's about assessing what controls are in place and why, so that the focus can be on how.** From a finance and compliance perspective, the key risks are: 1. Fraud (is our money going where it's meant to or being diverted?) 2. Money laundering 3. Breaching sanctions 4. Financing illegal activity. A lot of these controls were built into the design of the Fund. Having the link to other funding partners gave a level of comfort that these groups were who they said they were. The value of having the participatory panel, with groups selected by activists from those contexts also added legitimacy and strength. Then it's about making sure we are documenting really well the flow of money, but making that our labour, not the groups'.

X **I started my accounting career as an auditor,** which is fairly black and white, but what I always preferred in that role was understanding clients' organisations and the control environment they had built, and making recommendations that were actually appropriate and proportionate to that organisation. In essence, I wanted to add meaningful value, rather than out of the box solutions. Having this mindset and moving into the world of international development allowed for constant critical assessment of 'why are these processes in place?' and 'what value are they bringing?'. It seemed to me that large NGOs had established incredibly risk averse policies partly out of a fear of donor backlash. The result was creating additional burdens for funding partners to mitigate those risks, but which automatically excludes many partners/groups doing great work.

When I landed at Purposeful, one of the most exciting things was knowing I was coming into an organisation that trusted partners. It creates an entirely different starting point and dynamic in what processes are required, and how they are socialised. An added bonus was that many policies had to be drafted from scratch, so there was less 'unlearning' to do. Being a small team also enabled me to forge relationships with those doing the work who provided me with a much deeper contextual understanding, so that we could create processes that actually fit with Purposeful's culture.

The true cost of operationalising the Fund: *The design of the Global Resilience Fund took time, money and expertise, much of which was met by Purposeful from its own core resources. This is politically important to name because it highlights an essential need in the feminist funding ecosystem - that to move in truly responsive ways, requires healthy and well-resourced organisations who can mobilise and adapt when needed. To do that, long-term, flexible and core support for intermediary funders is key!*

OUR STORIES, EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS ARE NOT JUST ANECDOTES.

SPOTLIGHT ON FEMINIST LEARNING PRACTICE



Playinhershoes, Lebanon.

"PARTNERS APPRECIATED NOT HAVING THE BURDEN OF OFTEN COMPLICATED AND TIME-CONSUMING WRITTEN REPORTS. IN FACT, ONE GROUP REFERRED TO HAVING A LEARNING CALL INSTEAD OF A WRITTEN REPORT AS AN 'ACT OF SOLIDARITY'. HAVING A SPACE TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS AND SHARE ABOUT THEIR INITIATIVES, EXPERIENCES AS WELL AS HOW THEY'VE TACKLED BACKLASH, WAS CONSIDERED EXTREMELY VALUABLE BY THE PARTNERS. ENSURING OUR FEMINIST PRINCIPLES ARE REFLECTED EVEN IN OUR MEL PRACTICE ENSURED THAT OUR APPROACH IS RESPONSIVE TO THE REALITIES OF THE PARTNERS AND CREATED A MEANINGFUL SPACE FOR LEARNING."

BOIKANYO MODUNGWA, SENIOR INSIGHTS & LEARNING MANAGER – RESOURCING RESISTANCE, PURPOSEFUL

From early on in the Global Resilience Fund design process, we decided to move away from functional reporting to create spaces for open learning and thereby challenging dominant ways of knowing. We are using narrative to build understanding of contexts and create proof points for young feminist contributions to change in and beyond the pandemic. This methodology itself offers a firm statement that experiences and stories serve as evidence, and can inform our funding models going forward.

What are we uncovering about feminist learning processes?

- X By creating a verbal and collectivised reporting mechanism, we opened up space for groups to learn from each other, share strategies, build connections and seed collaborations with exciting possibilities emerging for 2021. In these times of the pandemic, spaciousness to be with each other and reflect on our work is critical.
- X To allow for full participation and to acknowledge the inherent power dynamics when funders stepped into the room, learning calls were held regionally and co-facilitated by panelists. It is also important to conduct learning calls in multiple languages,¹⁷ to enable as many activists as possible to participate in the language in which they can freely express themselves and connect with others without the language barriers so often faced.
- X By starting with stories rather than our own measurement metrics, we are building a much more authentic picture of change. We started by listening, using group-level and collective insights to draw inductively towards broader patterns of change. What we are left with is an understanding of Global Resilience Fund resources as one contribution towards a complex web of change, fuelled by financial and non-financial resources alike.

“THE START OF LAST YEAR BROUGHT WITH IT A PANDEMIC THAT TRANSFORMED THE WORLD IN WAYS WE COULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED. YET, AT THE EPICENTRE OF THIS STORM, THE GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND BECAME A PLACE OF DEEP CALM, OF RE-CENTERING, REFLECTION AND A SPACE TO REFRAME THIS CRISIS AS A PLACE TO FIND STRENGTH.”

LIESEL BAKKER, PURPOSEFUL, GRANTS AND PARTICIPATION MANAGER

SPOTLIGHT ON PLACE-BASED GRANT-MAKING IN SIERRA LEONE



As a Sierra Leone rooted organisation, Purposeful has the unique privilege to bring the principles of global grant-making home, and to bring the joy, resilience and brilliance of our home right back to the global. As we launched the Global Resilience Fund, we knew there was a real opportunity to amplify the politics and the practices of placed-based resourcing in more rooted and perhaps radical ways than is possible for a global fund.

In Sierra Leone, we have always supported girls living, surviving, fighting, making and co-creating at the margins of the margins: girls in deeply rural areas, without phones or internet access; girls who could not be further from the usual grant-making windows and donor agendas, yet, the girls who were and are and will be the bedrock of a movement for justice and liberation in Sierra Leone; girls who are together pushing back against violence, building together, saving together, modelling alternative ways of being together in the world. How did we resource these girls so often shut out from funding opportunities?

1. WE LOWERED BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND APPLY

We knew that girls groups would not have access to computers or the internet. We spread the word through extensive networks of traditional authorities and women's right organisations. We kept the application simple, through three questions that mirrored the language girls use about their own organising. Girls could apply over WhatsApp voice note and through a telephone call-back from one of our team in four local languages, making literacy no barrier to application.

"We got some amazing applications; songs, poems, beautiful insights into girls' lives and worlds. If we'd asked those girls to find a phone or a computer and sit down and write a grant application, even if they had somehow been able to do that, we would never have learned so much about who they are."

Isha Morgan-Conteh, Programme Coordinator, Purposeful

2. WE MET GIRLS WHERE THEY WERE – LITERALLY!

Our team travelled the country to take girls their grants - in cash - housed in special metal boxes. We took cars and bikes and boats to some of the most remote parts of the country. Isha reflects;

"When we got there, so many girls said they didn't think it could be true, we would never come. How could someone come all the way from Freetown just to bring them money so they could continue their work. Just doing that, just showing up, that started the relationship in a way that will create bonds for so long."

3. WE CENTRED THE COLLECTIVE AND REFRAMED ACCOUNTABILITY

Rather than asking girls to sign meaningless grant agreements in a language they didn't understand, we held space to make collective commitments to each other about how the funds would be spent, and that formed the basis of an accountability agreement between us all. These commitment ceremonies and spaces were a moment of true transformation for a process that can be both very functional and deeply power-laden in traditional philanthropy.



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING FROM TENSIONS TO TRANSFORMATIONS

Moving resources to young activists is full of complexity, tension and the profound possibility for transformation. So often, the needs and lived realities of young activist communities bump up against the limitations of our organisational structures and the broader systems in which we operate. Some of these tensions can be transformed through everyday acts of bravery, by stepping into relationships of trust and asking critical questions about why we work in the ways we do as funders. Other tensions can only be transformed as a collective, by sharing risks and living into the different expertise and political possibilities of each of us across the ecosystem.

To close out this section, Maria Bobenrieth and Jody Myrum, two of the originators of the Global Resilience Fund idea, reflect on how we built a fund in 'the space between' the usual tensions of this work.



POLARITIES

MARIA BOBENRIETH
AND JODY MYRUM

Embracing polarities created a unique frame for collaboration in addressing the needs of adolescent girls during the ongoing COVID-19 health, economic and social crises. Moreover, embracing and navigating specific polarities created key lessons in the ubiquitous Global Resilience Fund.

An important initial design criterion for the founding partners of the Fund was to acknowledge and hold polarities. A polarity, or paradox, is a situation in which opposing forces (poles) within a system pull at each other to keep things balanced. We consciously shifted from seeing polarities as ‘problems to be solved’, to view them instead as natural tensions in a complex system, whose independent and seemingly contradictory state, we needed to navigate as interdependent pairs, critical for the overall success of the Fund. Our commitment was to acknowledge polarities, explore them, create strategies and actions to expand them, and finally monitor and adjust as needed.¹⁸ Moreover, and critically important, this practice also led to our agreeing and holding ourselves accountable to a few but key values in decision-making.

We commenced by acknowledging our deepest fears within those polarities and simultaneously articulating our highest purpose. Although challenging, we had to check ourselves, individually and collectively from preferencing and attaching to one pole at the expense of its equally important converse. From this exercise we were able to commit to our core value of generating girl-centered ‘feminist ways’ to build consensus and drive innovation at all levels of the Fund’s design, development and delivery processes.

These ten polarities emerged as the building (versus stumbling) blocks of the Fund:

1. **Autocratic vs. bureaucratic = Collective decision-making**, minimising complex processes that slow everything down.
2. **Constraints vs. judicious = Meeting reasonable legal due diligence requirements**, without overburdening or disqualifying organisations with unnecessary overbearing requirements.
3. **Competition vs. cooperation = Fostering a spirit and practice of authentic collaboration**, moving towards a model of shared interests and reinforcing mutual support.
4. **Rapid vs. sustainable = Moving resources at speed** with intention and commitment to create lasting impact.
5. **Local vs. global = Being both deeply local and global in reach**, holding parallel processes to meet the needs of both.
6. **Speed vs. scale = Designing for replicability through active participation**, ongoing communication and clear accountabilities.
7. **Pooled vs. bespoke = Adapting for customisation**, within an overarching inclusive framework that works for all.
8. **Innovation vs. stability = Prioritising transformative advancements** by removing stifling bureaucracy that leads to stagnation.
9. **Permanence vs. transience = Creating a ‘pop-up’ concept** (timely, efficient, effective) with a long-term view of durability and sector transformation. Envisaging from the start a ‘pop-down’ (moving-on strategy) aimed at preservation and augmentation of gains.
10. **Inclusive vs. exclusive = Crafting a pooled resource mechanism** with broad membership criteria and few but key non-negotiable feminist girl-centered values.

Acknowledging, understanding and exploring these polarities created a context where we could leverage their natural tension as a creative versus destructive force. It also established an environment of respect that led to amazing results and richer communication among all stakeholders. Moreover, it created a more democratic model of philanthropy that included a pooled funding mechanism, shared governance, participatory grant-making and a rich environment of respect and learning for all stakeholders.

5. STRATEGIES AND ENTRY POINTS FOR YOUNG ACTIVIST-LED CHANGE

In this section, we look at some early insights into girl, trans and young women activist-led change and how this has shifted during the pandemic. To do this, we share reflections by activists from the Global Resilience Fund panel, and insights from learning calls three or four months after groups had received funds. As such, what we offer are a series of snapshots - windows into the worlds and work of activist groups. We have divided these insights into 'strategies' and 'entry-points', lifting up both the process and tactics of the work, as well as, the various themes and issues activists organise through and around. Our hope is to build out this offering and share a deeper look at girl and young women-led change as we move through the next phase of the Fund in 2021.

STRATEGY FOR CHANGE: MEETING IMMEDIATE NEEDS

The pandemic has exposed the profound inability, and unwillingness, of governments across the world to meet the most basic needs of the most marginalised citizens. As with so many other crises, young women and girls are playing the critical role of frontline health responder, providing care services, distributing basic resources and creating spaces of shelter for themselves and each other

- X **Walu Urban Women's Association** in Papua New Guinea, provided people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations with masks and sanitisers. In addition, they distributed reusable sanitary pads to girls in remote areas.
- X **Crisis Center for Women Victims of Gender, Family and Sexual Violence - "CHANCE"** in Kyrgyzstan, provided shelter for their members who needed a safe space to live.

- X **Haven for Artists** in Lebanon, converted their office into a shelter and distributed food, hygiene kits and clothes in the most damaged areas following the Beirut blasts. Having mobilised more funding, the group also provided home supplies and financial support such as rent assistance and storefront restorations.

STRATEGY FOR CHANGE: SUSTAINING THE CORE

While some groups are just able to self-fund their initiatives, increased job losses and limitations on movement have made this even more challenging than usual. Flexible resources to sustain the core of their work has been critical for many in the cohort. Groups have used funds to pay rent for their operating spaces, cover stipends or salaries for volunteers and staff, and purchase new equipment to help them remain connected through lockdowns.

- X **Colectiva Trans-Parencias** in Costa Rica, shared that the funds gave them stability and opened the political possibility of organising with other trans organisations and, therefore, of strengthening the trans movement in Costa Rica. They were, and still are, able to connect with other trans activists to generate a relevant and much needed intergenerational and cross movements dialogue.
- X **Dhaarchidi** in the lower Himalayas, shared how the funds enabled them to cover the teams stipends, support the team's needs and allowed them to weather what was and continues to be a very difficult situation. Thus, the funding led to "less anxiety" and "kept the collective's spirit alive".
- X In Croatia, **Drum 'n' Bijes** were able to buy new equipment and resources. They describe this as contributing towards their greater autonomy as activists. "It has given us the opportunity to now do some things we haven't been able to before like raise visibility by designing our very own logo and printing shirts and stickers with it, but also build our autonomy by buying our own drums."



Drum 'n' Rage (Drum 'n' bijes), Croatia.

STRATEGY FOR CHANGE: CREATING SPACES OF COLLECTIVE CARE

Seeding practices and cultures of individual and collective care and wellbeing have been a core strategy of young feminist organisers for at least a decade.¹⁹ The period of the pandemic has seen this strategy deepen and expand. A number of groups spoke about the personal and broader trauma being experienced in their contexts due to economic hardship and loss of life as a result of COVID-19. However, many groups have not been able to prioritise their own mental health or process their own trauma, focusing primarily on serving their communities. Despite these immense challenges, activists have strengthened bonds of solidarity and support, with young feminist-led solidarity economies and informal support networks springing up across every part of the globe. **Carolina Coelho, one of the panelists from Brazil shares below, the hardship that activists faced and their commitment to each other during this time.**

“The failure of Latin American states to respond adequately to the pandemic was irresponsible and damaging, whether due to human loss or the socio-economic upheaval that persists in the region. A close look at local activism, notes the agility and creativity with which, even in precariousness, women keep resisting.”

The opportunity to see so many groups and organisations doing emergency and creative work in their territories says a lot about how, as young women, we understand that it is necessary to challenge the norm and give a chance to what we believe. Of those who wrote their proposals, and those who had the hard time choosing them, all came from real experiences of activism and life, changing the world through day-by-day change. The self-organisation of women in their territories was definitely a way to strengthen and touch other small groups of women. Throughout my activist trajectory, I have always heard: feminism (intersectional anti-racist and transactivist) is a little ant’s job.

Therefore, to those who transformed their kitchens, their backyards, their living rooms, their study tables, their entire houses to welcome and transform precariousness into sharing - they have come far!”

To read Carolina’s full article visit the [LINK](#)



Para tener espacios de trabajo libres de violencias y acoso.

Para que la salud sexual y salud reproductiva sea para todas.

Para responder juntas al abandono, las violencias del Estado y reparar juntas sus efectos.

Para construir un mundo humano y no a medida del capital.

Para poder respirar.

Vamos juntas por la libertad, por educación, sororidad y respeto a las decisiones de las mujeres, lesbianas, bisexuales, personas trans, no binarias.

Sostenemos redes de sobrevivencia, cuidado, cooperación y formación política entre mujeres y disidencias.

Reconocemos nuestros cuerpos/territorios como espacios de cariño y apropiación.

A page from *Zine Resiliencia* by Abril Angelica Rodriguez Martinez

- X Tiko from **Helping Hand works in the conflict-affected and occupied parts of Georgia**. They shared a powerful account of the challenges their group is facing “It is a really bad situation for young women and girls, as girls don’t go to school, don’t go outside, and there are high rates of violence and depression. They are seeing an increased number of suicides, with girls of 14 - 18 years-old wanting to finish their lives. There is a stigma associated with seeking help. There is shame. To meet the needs of these girls, Helping Hand has started providing mental health service support, hired professional psychologists and offering confidential space for people to talk and access support. Everything is done virtually due to the situation of the pandemic, and we are covering the internet costs of the girls, even using neighbours houses and internet access”.
- X Some groups have been providing psychological support to some of their members who experienced violence during the pandemic. **Serena Morena**, a feminist network in Peru that supports people with home-based abortions, shared how a part of the funds allowed them to provide psychological support to one of their members who suffered sexual violence caused by a police agent.
- X **DiRAMONA**, a group of young, lesbian, and bisexual feminist psychologists who seek to generate more resilient communities in Mexico, shared that the funds not only allowed them to provide more psychological support for girls and women but also for themselves. The number of women they accompany to access safe abortions has peaked dramatically, which has taken a toll on their mental health as a small team of three people.
- X **‘Feminist Diaries’ in Occupied Palestine** is an intergenerational group of young women and girls who use arts-based methodologies to highlight their realities under settler colonialism and patriarchy, while providing possibilities and alternatives for a just feminist world.

To read an interview with the group’s founder, **Sandie Hanna with Libyan activist and journalist, Ayat Menina, please visit the LINK**



ENTRY POINT FOR CHANGE: THE ACUTE NEED FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS SERVICES THROUGH A PANDEMIC

The focus on COVID-19 in most countries led to the redirection of health resources and services to address the pandemic over Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services. In addition, lockdowns and reduced access to transport have limited access to health facilities, and as a result, a number of groups sought to facilitate access to contraceptives and antiretrovirals (ARVs) – particularly, LGBTQAI+ groups.

- X **Brown Girl Woke in Samoa** created spaces to talk about menstrual hygiene with support from a local nurse association, as well as, teaching girls how to sew reusable pads. Through this new initiative, they are partnering with a disability rights organisation to make reusable sanitary pads for girls who are blind.
- X **Adolescents Initiative for Reform (AIR)** is a girl-led group of 14 – 19 year olds in Cameroon. They run a peer education programme in schools focused on menstrual hygiene and SRHR. Once schools were closed due to COVID-19, the group began sharing content through radio, posters and social media. They also distribute ‘dignity kits’ to internally displaced girls, and with resources, the group have been able to pivot their strategies to respond to girls’ needs during a time of great flux.
- X In Mexico, **Mano Amiga de la Costa Chica**, an organisation that works for the political, economic and cultural empowerment of Afro-Mexican women and girls, has been promoting sexual and reproductive rights in their communities through feminist self-care kits, including a guide to conscious menstruation.

ENTRY-POINT FOR CHANGE: LGBTQAI+ ORGANISING AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF REPRESSIVE REGIMES

The lack of queer-affirming spaces and the existence of anti same sex relationship laws creates a hostile environment for LGBTQAI+ communities in many countries. LGBTQAI+ groups who were funded by the Fund reflected on how their pre-COVID-19 context was extremely challenging, particularly for those in MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa and in the Asia/Pacific region. This was linked to the ‘illegality of their existence’, both in terms of how they identify, as well as, their organising - often getting arrested or facing harassment for their work.

During COVID-19 the loss of jobs, the loneliness that comes from having to isolate or the pressure to isolate in homes where they are not accepted has compounded pre-existing challenges. Trans women and teenagers have specifically faced issues in accessing government support.

- X **Lesbian* Resistance in Georgia**, used funding to provide direct financial support to their community, acknowledging that a majority were working in the service industry or informal economy - spaces hardest hit by lockdown.
- X **Bethlehem Queers in Occupied Palestine**, created a one-of-a-kind space where Palestinian LGBTQAI+ individuals could feel heard, safe, accepted, and understood. The feedback they have been getting, indicates exactly this.

ENTRY-POINT FOR CHANGE: RESISTING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

As outlined in Orchid Project²⁰ in their report in 2020, 'from March 2020, early in the global COVID-19 crisis, reports began to emerge from our partners and allies that they were witnessing elevated rates of female genital cutting (FGC)'.

Fatmata Kamissie, one of the Global Resilience Fund Panelists, and also part of a group in Sierra Leone, shares her experience of working on FGM during the pandemic. Uncut Gems began conducting community awareness and radio programmes about the impacts of COVID-19 on the practice of FGM. We found out that, the increased rates of FGM were being reported where COVID-19 related lockdowns were being seen as an opportunity to carry out FGM undetected. Lack of FGM integration within the COVID-19 response is leaving girls at risk and survivors with no recourse to essential prevention, protection and support services. Fear of the virus may be leading to a re-emergence of previously abandoned social norms around FGM in some rural communities..

To read Fatmata's full piece visit the [LINK](#)



ABOUT YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANISING

The context is harsher than ever, with the pandemic still unfolding, authoritarianism on the rise and anti-gender movements more well-resourced than ever. As lockdown orders went into effect around the world, girls, young women and broader movements experienced deepening violence, restrictions on basic freedoms as well as, the constant risk of contracting COVID-19. Faced with the challenges of meeting in-person, feminist activists innovated to adapt to the moment, identifying creative ways to continue organising and caring for their communities. Using a mix of digital technology, lower-access technology (such as SMS and radio), and hybrid organising models, they have tapped into relief distribution networks and existing community outreach systems.

12 months on, it is evident that young feminists are as creative and courageous as ever, and continue to support each other through generating spaces of care and providing critical services to endure this crisis, from food security to menstrual pads to psychological support - all against profound odds and with extraordinary agility. Young feminists' resilience comes from their ability to weave community and practice solidarity with each other and the fact that their organising is as intersectional as it is grounded, in the shifting needs of their community. With organisational models that are light and able to pivot and shift, collectives have been able to move their work online, pivot their time and practice and meet their communities where they are needed most. They are able to weather the storm as they move like water.

Resources continue to be scarce, restricted and hard to access for girl and young feminist-led groups, and feminist movements at large. This contributes to competition and can limit powerful cross movement and cross region solidarity to spark and thrive. We are at a time where reimagining and realising alternatives is a powerful antidote to our unravelling systems. More and better funding, based on an understanding of power and politics, woven with trust and respect, is needed to see us through the storm.

6. TOWARDS A THRIVING ECOSYSTEM THAT RESPONDS IN CRISIS

"THE GOAL IS NOT TO JUST FIX WHAT'S BROKEN. WE ALSO STRIVE FOR JOY AND HAPPINESS, AND LOVE AND ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE GOOD. IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT FOCUSING ON THE NEGATIVE. RESILIENCE COMES FROM JOY. WE SURVIVE, NOT BECAUSE OF THE BAD STUFF, BUT BECAUSE OF THE RESERVOIR OF GOOD STUFF THAT WE HAVE TO TAP INTO. HOW CAN WE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS TO BUILD THAT RESERVOIR?"

MEDINA HAERI, OAK FOUNDATION

At the moment, we are at a crossroads of crisis and of possibility. In many ways, younger feminist movements are more fierce and vibrant than ever, playing a critical role in supporting their communities through the pandemic. At the same time, a small pocket of justice funders have stepped up with bold new strategies to finance feminist movements, as this moment calls on all of us to do. And yet, girls, trans, non binary and young women also face an ever-increasing backlash and huge gaps in resources. Many donors and donor agencies are slashing budgets, and there is a general sense of precariousness around funding. The future is uncertain and accountability to movements remains patchy.

What is needed now from funders is bold leadership and a willingness to trust and resource movements not only to survive, but thrive through this period. As the pandemic worsens across contexts and many communities are only now feeling some of the harshest consequences, the need to think carefully about what comes next is critical. The Global Resilience Fund has been a raft in the storm for many in this moment, but our resources also represent just a drop in the ocean of what is needed for young activists to emerge from this moment as healthy, whole and free. If we take the lessons from the last year as a starting point, we begin to see both the imperative and the real-life possibilities of funding young feminist-led strategies. If we hold these possibilities close, with love and liberation as our guiding light, we might better weather future storms together.



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