

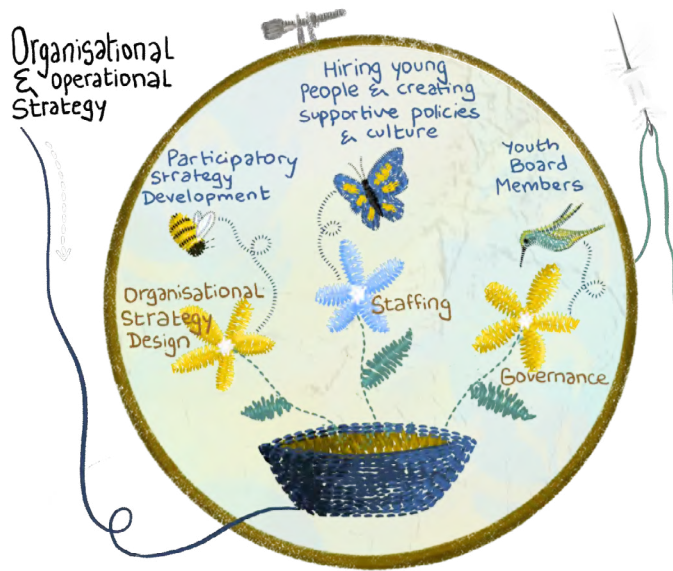


SECTION 4.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIFFERENT PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS

The research brought to light twelve participatory mechanisms. These are often connected with each other and there is overlap. This section provides more detail including an overview and practical considerations for each.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS



HIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES, POLICIES, AND CULTURE THAT GIVES THEM INFLUENCE

Hiring child and youth engagement experts is vital to support any meaningful participation. A good approach, where possible, is to hire young people themselves to lead this work. Hiring young people to manage participatory processes, youth-centered co-design processes, and youth partnerships helps to build trust and open dialogue.⁷⁸ Being young, however, does not automatically make you an ally to child and youth groups. Their values and experience must align with the child and youth groups they are working with and, like any adult working with young people, they should have a deep understanding of the privilege and power they hold within a fund and the bias they might have.

INSPIRATION FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:

- Restless Development is an example of an organization intentionally restructuring its leadership and bringing in more young people. Their hiring page is more "youth-friendly" including [Tips to Apply](#) and transparent pay scale and benefits.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide training, as with all staff, on safeguarding, power, privilege, and unconscious bias.
- Consider developing a peer mentoring scheme, pairing younger and older staff for a mutually beneficial experience.
- Provide opportunities for growth, learning, and exposure, e.g., support younger staff to represent their own work with senior leadership, represent the organization externally, and undertake professional development training.
- Encourage internal support and solidarity groups and networks.
- Provide feminist leadership training for all, particularly those who are managing others.
- Develop clear career progression pathways.
- Salaries and benefits should align with your organization's human resources policy, while recognizing that paid experience is not the only experience of value. Volunteering and organizing experience can also contribute to someone's experience, knowledge, and expertise, and should be reflected in the budget.
- Consider budgeting for professional development opportunities.
- Young staff members or paid interns should be compensated as per your organization's human resources policy. If they are based in the Global South and working remotely, consider providing additional funds for needs like wifi or co-working spaces.
- Where there are prohibitive policies on years of experience, work to build organizational capacity on valuing lived experience of young people and toward reducing barriers.
- Reflect on the experience they are bringing to the organization. While a young person might not have 10 years of paid work history, they may have 10 years of volunteering, organizing, and movement building experience. This does not equate to an entry level role and salary.

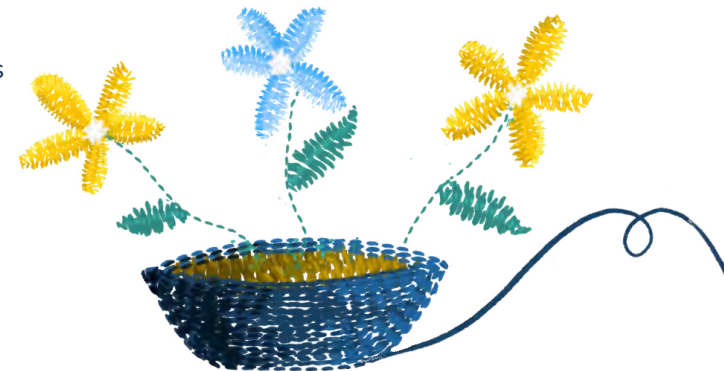
PARTICIPATORY STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

“When we were developing NoVo’s advancing adolescent girls’ rights strategy, our strategy [for working with girl and young feminist led and centered organizations] ended up being so much better because it was done in a participatory way, and in deep relationship. We learned a lot about how we could support girls where they are, in the movements they are a part of, and with the kinds of resources they need. This also meant we could contextualize our support, based on time and place.” -Jody Myrum, NoVo Foundation’s former director

Engaging children and young people in strategy development is an approach that can be adopted by funders of any size. It can include organizational strategy development or the development of a youth participation program or grant-making strategy. For larger, private funds, starting with a programmatic strategy allows for a participatory process while containing it within one team. It is helpful to convene an advisory group for the process, which can be made up of child- and youth-led grantee partners, children and young people from adult-led grantee partners, or children and young people who respond to an open call. The advisory group could also be supplemented by engagement or validation with broader networks and movements through social media, town halls, or focus group discussions. Strategy development processes alone take time - months or years. This is no different when engaging children and young people and which can, in fact, take more time. Being flexible and building in time for iteration and learning is important. When done properly, participatory strategy development can spark other forms of participation, such participatory research, evaluation, and grant-making.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Define a clear Terms of Reference for those who will take part. Include expected time commitment and responsibilities, as well as clarity on whether they have decision-making power of some or all components, or whether this is just a consultative process.
- Hold a series of listening sessions, virtually or in-person, to collect initial input and then design sessions to co-create elements of the program.
- If you are starting a new program in an area where you do not have existing networks, engage children and young people through local partners, groups, and organizations. This helps to build trust from the beginning.
- Hire local facilitators to tailor the session plans and learning questions to the local context and to lead the sessions themselves.
- Allow enough time! Nine to twelve months minimum is ideal to allow for relationships to be built and for advisory groups or local partnerships to be formed.
- Build in accountability mechanisms from the beginning. Decide in advance when and how you will share back your analysis from the process and how it has shaped your strategy. Validation or feedback sessions can also provide a space for coalition building and collective cross-movement work.
- Be open to experimentation and iteration. If ideas are coming up that you would not have thought of or chosen, can you build in time to test these or sense-check them with other stakeholders?
- Be honest about what decision-making power the children and young people will have. It is fine if you are only consulting; however, it is important to be clear about their level of influence. What other layers of sign off and input might affect the outcome? If a recommendation has not been taken up, be prepared to explain why and manage expectations in advance.



SPOTLIGHT:

NoVo Foundation's adolescent girls' rights initiative's strategy design process

In an effort to shift unequal funder-grantee power-dynamic between funder and grantee, in 2016-2017 NoVo Foundation partnered with trans and cis girls, young non-binary people, and their adult allies to organize listening sessions across the US as part of developing their grantmaking strategy. NoVo targeted regions with the least philanthropic investment, including the US South, Southwest, and Midwest, and held listening sessions across diverse communities in those regions. Youth and adult facilitators who work with girls and young people were hired to design and hold unique listening sessions for each of the regions, so they were context specific. NoVo staff attended as listeners and learners while a cultural anthropologist accompanied the team to document the process. Separate sessions were organized with partners, allies, girls under the age of 18, and non-binary children and adolescents.

After each session NoVo worked with the facilitators to make sense of the learning and start to translate that into a philanthropic strategy. Recognizing their accountability to all who contributed to the process, after there was a draft strategy developed based on the listening sessions, people from different regions were invited back into the process to a session in New York where the strategy was presented and people could give critical feedback. During the feedback session they shared what was working, what was missing and what needed to change. This validation process further shaped the final strategy.

This participatory approach transformed NoVo's strategy: "It's a way to build knowledge and to get input into your strategy because you're iterating and learning as you go, with people who are actively doing the work ... there were definitely nuances in the strategy and the strategy changed as a result of the sessions," stated Jody Myrum, NoVo's Former Program Director, "It was also really important that while we took the time to do this listening and co-design with girls, young people and their adult allies, we never stopped grantmaking. One of the greatest ways to learn is to make grants and build relationships with people doing the work. This should not stop while building strategy- both because of the depth of learning it provides and because our job as grantmakers is to move money."



YOUTH GOVERNANCE: BOARDS AND MEMBERSHIP

“How comfortable can a young community organizer be to speak up when they’re sitting next to someone who has worked in philanthropy for decades, or when they’re outnumbered at that table by wealthy, white donors, whose money it is they’re deciding how to spend?”⁸⁰

Where possible, a priority for Global North-based funders should be the diversification of their boards to be more reflective of the communities they serve and fund. This could be a long-term goal with a short- or medium-term goal of board readiness, board training, and one or two youth board members. Shadow youth boards, like child/youth parliaments, should be avoided, as they rarely have the decision-making power needed for real influence. The engagement of children and young people in formal governance has the potential for huge influence but also harm, if not done properly. If your board is primarily adult, white, and lacking experience working with children and young people, it might cause more harm than good. Consider whether your board is ready to meaningfully engage a young person. If not, it can be a waste of time and energy to push for a youth board member. Instead, focus on facilitating a participatory strategy development process. Membership organizations or organizations where community members have legitimate decision-making power, such as CIVICUS, also have an opportunity to intentionally diversify and build membership with certain groups or communities. Amnesty International, for example, developed a youth strategy with a specific goal of growing their youth membership.⁷⁹

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Consider bringing together relevant staff and community members to reflect on these questions:
 - Is your board open to diversification and to the inclusion of young people on it?
 - Is your board ready to support the meaningful participation of young people?
 - What is the current makeup of your membership and is there an opportunity to diversify it?
 - Are the conditions in place for young people to feel valued, included, and respected?
 - Are there other mechanisms that might be more meaningful and a better place to start?
- Talk with children and young people in your networks, share information to explain your governance structure and internal processes. They can then make an informed decision about what type of engagement in your governance structure would be helpful and meaningful.
- For board membership:
 - Develop your short-, medium-, and long-term goals. For example, providing board training and readiness (short-term), adding 1-2 young people to the board, or forming a hybrid, intergenerational group (medium-term), and creating a fully diverse and representative board (long-term).
 - Provide training on meaningful participation, safeguarding, power, privilege, and bias for all board members.
 - Provide board training and a mentor for any youth board members.
 - Commit to having more than one spot on the board for young people so they have peer support.
 - Provide training for anyone on the governance team or other staff involved in preparing board documents and meetings so they are inclusive and accessible.
 - Have your community vote on the board and feed into board nominations and decision-making.
 - As with any board, members should not receive financial compensation. However, a youth board member may require additional support to be able to participate equally, such as additional training, data packages, and a laptop or computer.
- For membership organizations, consult your members on the question of diversification and youth participation: What might this look like? What considerations such as access needs should be considered? This could be through town halls, focus group discussions, or polls.

INSPIRATION FROM OTHERS:

- WAGGGS recruited its [first ever youth board member](#) in 2018.
- [FRIDA's board](#) is made up of young feminists from the Global South who hold diverse identities and experiences.
- [African Movement of Working Children](#) is a child- and youth-governed organization.

SPOTLIGHT:

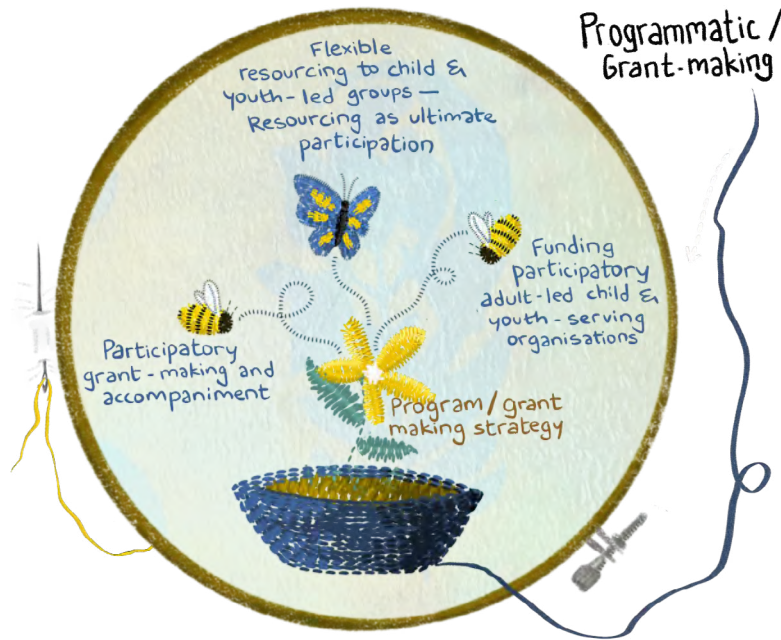
Learning for Well-being Foundation

Learning for Well-being Foundation, a child rights and wellbeing foundation based in the Netherlands, began a process two years ago to create an intergenerational board. As a result of the process, half of its members are aged 15 to 24, and have equal voting rights and shared responsibilities. The model was designed through a 3-day participatory workshop with young people and older adults. The young people were briefed before the workshop to help them prepare and the workshop was viewed as the beginning of a learning journey for the whole group. They decided against a “shadow board” and felt that the intergenerational model would be more meaningful.

To recruit new board members, the foundation reached out to young people in their networks who applied through written letter or voice or video recording. The criteria was that these young people had experienced the foundation’s work, either by being beneficiaries of programs led by the foundation or partnership projects with other organizations. The board voted on the new members just as they would have with prospective adult board members. Both the young people and the adult members had misconceptions about what the experience would be like. Some adults were worried about the young people’s capacity to grasp the financial responsibility and the young people were concerned about potential rigidity. These concerns were allayed as the board began to work together, though the journey of learning continued.

Young people received orientation before each meeting to ensure they understood the board papers. Older board members learned how to adapt the papers to be more accessible and transparent. Both felt the process has been a positive one: “The younger board members have brought new perspectives into governance discussions, not simply due to their age but also in light of their lived experience and the intersectional identities they represent. The older board members also express a sense of appreciation for the renewed dynamic in the board which now feels more human, and more meaningful for each contributor.”⁸¹

GRANT-MAKING



The area of participation is unique in that there is crossover and nuance depending on whether you are working with child- and youth-serving organizations (supporting participation through participatory grant-making or by explicitly funding participatory organizations) or with children and youth-led organizations (through participatory grantmaking and accompaniment or by providing flexible funding that may not be distributed through participatory grant-making).

To keep things simple, we will present the following general mechanisms and explain within them the nuance of working with child- and youth-serving organizations versus child- and youth-led organizations:

- Participatory grant-making.
- Direct and flexible resourcing to child- and youth-led organizations.
- Funding participatory adult-led child- and youth-serving organizations.



PARTICIPATORY GRANT-MAKING AND ACCOMPANIMENT

"I was part of the initial stage of designing the Takura grant-making - in fact, for advocating for it in the first place for it to come...and secondly, when it [came], we initiated it, we designed the plan together. Thirdly, we also distribute the funds together to young people, we select them and distribute the funds together. We monitor the young people together, you know, and we are in the third phase of the grant making process and that has been an exciting moment when young people take the lead." -Youth activist, Sierra Leone

Participatory grant-making might be the most powerful way that a funder can truly shift power into the hands of children and young people. When done well, it will enable a process of trust-building, mutual learning, and genuine influence over decision-making. It has the potential to have a positive impact on the individuals involved and strengthen their groups with increased capacity in financial management. It helps to lift the veil on the elusive funding ecosystem and enables funders to connect with more diverse, nascent, and hard-to-reach groups. Participatory grant-making may involve the funding going directly to child and youth groups (e.g., [Global Resilience Fund](#)) or it may be that children and young people decide on how funding should be distributed to organizations that are working directly with children and young people (e.g., [EMpower](#)).

CONSIDERATIONS:

- If the aim is for children and young people to decide on funding that is being distributed to child- and youth-led organizations, determine which children and young people will be making the decisions; decision-making could involve current grantees, former grantees, or representative regional panels.
- If the aim is for children and young people to decide on funding that is being distributed to adult-led, child- and youth-serving grantees, you could create an Advisory Panel with representatives from the region, country, or context drawing from your existing networks, partners networks, or through open call.
- Commit to an inclusive and accessible process from the beginning. If creating an Advisory Panel, think about the different identities that should be reflected and build an outreach plan based on this. Invite disability rights activists to sit on the panel, pay for advice from disability rights groups on how to design a process that is inclusive e.g., what technology to use and what accessibility measures to plan for.
- Design a simple application process. This will be helpful not only to the groups applying but also to those who are reviewing and scoring applications. Provide training to everyone involved and build in enough time to do this.
- Decide on a decision-making process. This might be an online, anonymised voting process whereby applications are reviewed and then scored. This might be individual scoring followed by group discussions to explore nuance and varying opinions.
- Consider building diversity into the decision-making: decide whether a percentage of grants will be reserved only for girl-led groups, LGBTQIA+ -led groups, Black- and Indigenous-led groups, etc.
- Be honest about any limitations. For example, where a due diligence process might affect a recommendation from the panel.
- For groups that are not selected but are strong nonetheless, think about other funders that you are connected to. Might you be able to share profiles or applications (with data protection and consent in mind)?

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- CRIF's [learning brief on the decolonize! Fund](#), a participatory grant-making initiative.
- FRIDA's '[Letting the Movement Decide.](#)'
- Disability Rights Fund '[Reflecting a Movement's Principles in Grantmaking Structure: Evidence of the Benefits of Participation from the Disability Rights Fund and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.](#)'
- [Equality Accelerator platform](#) - through which participatory grant cycles can be run.
- [Participatory Grant-Making Community.](#)
- Spark Fund's [example TOR for panelists.](#)
- Purposeful's [Weathering the Storm](#) report includes information on how to engender disability inclusion from the beginning of a participatory grant-making process.



SPOTLIGHT:

Fund for Global Human Rights and Purposeful's Tar Kura Participatory Grant-Making Initiative

"For young people, the value of this experience went far beyond the money they received to implement their work. The true value was in the trust that was placed on them, in having someone else believe that they were capable of making a difference."⁸⁵

FGHR and Purposeful collaborated to design the Tar Kura initiative, a participatory grant-making initiative. Through an open call, nine youth panelists from across the country were selected, including seven young women. They received capacity building training and support throughout. The panelists defined the eligibility criteria for the grantee groups, led the selection process, and made the final decision. This was also a power-sharing partnership between FGHR and Purposeful. They agreed it would be an equitable partnership from the beginning, regardless of who provided funding. They identified shared feminist values at the beginning and grounded their partnership practice in this. An external evaluation of the project found that *"the rebalancing of power...was based on something essential: trust between FGHR and Purposeful and between them and the young people."*⁸² Efforts were made to ensure the process was inclusive and responsive, including working around school timings; ensuring application processes in English and Krio, the local language; and designing different outreach strategies like radio, flyers, and Whatsapp. Non-financial compensation was provided to panelists and grantees throughout the project including leadership training, networking opportunities, and skills training on project management, monitoring, reporting and financial management. Chaperones were also provided for panelists under the age of 18. Staff worked closely with chaperones and parents to support safe travel to and from convenings.

Staff members purposefully developed an initial shortlist of 45 eligible applications based on an initial 136 applications. The youth panelists then reviewed this list to decide where funding would go. The funding was not limited to a geographical or thematic area to ensure as much flexibility as possible. Where groups were not legally registered, grantee partners worked with fiscal sponsors who also received capacity building. The evaluation noted that many fiscal sponsors still held *"preconceptions about young people and a highly paternalistic attitude."*⁸³ Another challenge, and practical consideration, is the time taken to ensure a truly inclusive process. The project timeline was determined with youth panelists. Being part of the review panel strengthened skills in teamwork as well as in safeguarding approaches and participatory processes. Young people also noted that the process gave them *"an opportunity to interact with youth beyond their immediate circles."*⁸⁴ Both panelists and grantees were involved in defining success, which contributed to participatory evaluation and youth-responsive reporting.



FLEXIBLE RESOURCING TO CHILD- AND YOUTH-LED GROUPS

"As an organization, when we receive flexible funding, we read it as like direct and honest feeling, honest connection, and you feel like you would not, you would never betray that trust." -Youth Activist, Ukraine

If your organizational or program strategy has a focus on strengthening child and youth movements, providing direct flexible, multi-year funding to child and youth groups directly or through a truly participatory girls, youth, or women's fund might be the most trusting and important thing you can do. On the spectrum of participation, providing flexible funding ensures children and young people's self-led and self-organized work is resourced and lifted up. It requires letting go of traditional partnership agreements, reporting processes, and ways of working.⁸⁶

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Consider whether you are best placed to fund groups directly or whether it would be more efficient and effective to work with an existing fund that is already set up to partner meaningfully with child- and youth-led groups.
- If you are resourcing groups directly, think about whether any of the participatory methodologies in this toolkit can help build a trusting and meaningful relationship, e.g., participatory grant-making, grantee-centered reporting, and so on.
- Rethink your partnership agreement, co-developing one with youth partners. Plan International's toolkit below can be helpful in thinking through each step of the partnership.
- Spend time reading through the 'tools and resources' listed to the right, particularly [No Straight Lines](#) and the [CIVICUS Resourcing Playbook](#).
- If you are not already set up to move resources directly to children and young people, a strong recommendation from feminist- and youth-led funders^{87 88}, is to fund girls, children, youth, and women's funds to disperse the funding and provide accompaniment.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- CIVICUS [Resourcing Playbook](#).
- FRIDA [No Straight Lines](#).
- FRIDA and Mama Cash [Girls to the Front](#).
- Plan International A Toolkit: [Pathways to Partnering with Youth-led Groups and Organizations](#).
- We Trust You(th) [Resources & Recommendations for Funders](#).

SPOTLIGHT:

Global Resilience Fund

The Global Resilience Fund (GRF) was launched in May of 2020. Housed and facilitated by Purposeful, the GRF was launched by a cross-section of 25 funders as a pop-up COVID-19 response fund to directly resource girls and young feminist's brave and transformative strategies. From May to December 2020, the GRF moved \$1M to 234 organizations led by girls and young feminists from around the world. The fund has been able to move money quickly and directly to girls and young activists in varied amounts and timelines, depending on individual needs. The GRF focused on finding concrete and flexible ways to distribute funds, such as via Paypal and Western Union and through fiscal sponsors... A critical feature of the fund has been working with partners to determine who is best placed across the funding ecosystem to move money quickly and in responsive ways. In some cases this has been directly through the Global Resilience Fund, which offers to be a fiscal sponsor for organizations and funders who experience difficulty in moving money to informal or unregistered groups. In other cases, GRF has moved money through partners who are better-equipped to do so, given their local relationships and networks in that crisis context.

The fund engages young activists in a participatory panel, whereby they make decisions on funding and drive key initiatives around accompaniment. In 2022, the GRF has focused on supporting young feminist activists through emerging and intersecting crises. Called to action by activists who were funded in earlier rounds and GRF panelists from the region, the GRF has focused its energies to resource and respond to young feminists who currently reside in or are fleeing from Ukraine. To date, our support has been focused on emergency funding and in bringing funders and activists together for critical dialogue. As crises continue to unfold around the world, the GRF continues to be called on by activists and funders to move resources to girls and young feminists who are impacted by and responding to crisis in their contexts.



FUNDING PARTICIPATORY ADULT-LED CHILD- AND YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

For larger donors that may not be well placed to work directly with children and youth - such as private foundations, public foundations, and bilateral and multilateral donors - resourcing child- and youth-serving organizations is an important way to support meaningful child and youth participation. Ensuring that the partners have participatory and powerbuilding practices when working with children and young people can be a positive way to contribute to this work. There is a spectrum of how rigorous the approach can be, from including a question in your application form, to having participation as a criterion for grant-giving, to creating ongoing space (and resources!) for deepening participatory practices.⁸⁹ The intention is a critical first step; it should be clearly outlined in your grant-making strategy and formalized through policy and procedure where possible. It is important to remember the power dynamics at play between a funder and grantee partner; however, if the intention is built into the application process from the beginning, it can be managed respectfully and sensitively. In the best-case scenario, if you can define joint learning agendas and use an approach rooted in the needs and rights of children and young people, you will have stronger outcomes.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- As a funder who is also navigating your own power, how you open these conversations is critical. If a grantee partner is not committed to power-sharing or meaningful participation with children and/or young people, be cautious not to push them toward this trajectory.
- Commit to including participation as a criterion for new grantees so that, if you are working with child- and youth-serving grantees, there is a demonstrated commitment to working with young people in ways that center their power and decision-making.
- Include relevant questions in the application form with a clear plan for how to put them into practice and follow up.
- Prioritize organizations that have clear experience in supporting participatory processes and a commitment to working in ways that shift power and decisions to young people, including through participatory grantmaking or governance.
- Convene peer-learning spaces on meaningful participation to deepen and strengthen participatory practices between grantees, whilst building connections and sparking cross-movement collaboration. This should be grounded in the needs of grantees and driven by their support and accompaniment needs.
- Provide funding that is flexible in how it is used and by when so that grantees can take the time needed to support meaningful participation processes. For example, if your grantee partner is telling you that a participatory process can take up to a year, allow them that time.
- Provide training or grants for training on participatory action research, monitoring and evaluation, and co-design.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- CIVICUS' [Solidarity Fund](#) is an example of participatory grant-making with adult grantees.
- Institute of Development Studies' [Rejuvenate project](#), which includes a living archive of child and youth participatory practices, ongoing blogs and articles including a [published paper](#).
- FRIDA [No Straight Lines](#).
- [Anonymised sample Safeguarding Policy](#) from a Private Funder that is shared with grantees.

SPOTLIGHT:

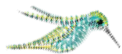
EMpower

EMpower includes participation as a criteria for adult led grantees in a variety of ways. Rooted in our Girl Strategy, it is a question posed in grant applications as well as our grant review parameters. In this way, it becomes one of the elements of review. The other ways EMpower builds and supports participation for adult led grantees is by incentivizing and providing frameworks to support participation, sourcing insight, when needed, from both our grantee partners and the young people they work with. EMpower convenes and curates regional spaces that enable grantee partners to cede seats or spaces to the girls and young people they work with.

Grantee partners are required to report on their child and youth participation approach as well as the outcomes i.e. what did the participation inform or result in. EMpower works with grantee partners on a demand basis to provide resources and support around critical elements of meaningful participation including tokenism, remuneration, setting up for success, and safeguarding.

Like EMpower, any grantee partners are on a learning path. For some of the more recent partners, their engagement with EMpower is what triggers the space and resourcing to incorporate meaningful participation in their activities. Therefore, there is a spectrum of how grantee partners support meaningful participation, that ranges from program design to leadership and governance transitions.

INFLUENCING



CHILD- AND YOUTH-LED OR CENTERED ADVOCACY, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, AND COMMUNICATIONS



Influencing involves deploying a combination of approaches to call for policy or practice change from people and institutions that hold power. This could include one or more of the following: advocacy, communications, public mobilization, and strategic partnerships. There is usually a strategic goal or objective, with clear decision-making targets whose behavior or beliefs you are trying to change. Decision-making targets might include individuals within international bodies like the United Nations, national governments, corporations, philanthropy, the media, or segments of the general public. The ability to influence public policy differs depending on the lobbying laws within the context where the funder is operating. For example, within the US, private foundations may engage in advocacy and fund advocacy activities although they cannot engage in direct or grassroots lobbying.⁹⁰ It also differs depending on the funder's internal expertise, e.g., whether they have advocacy or campaigning teams in-house.

There are different ways to influence as a funder. Intermediary or public funders might have more freedom to undertake direct advocacy or to support their grantees to do so. Others might work with partners who are better equipped and able to influence, including NGOs. Source funders in contexts with more limited lobbying laws might only do communications or engage in conferences and other convening spaces. Whatever the approach, it involves institutions working, directly or indirectly, to influence the external landscape; there is usually space for meaningful child and youth participation.

Funders can:

- Consult children and young people (from grantee groups or advisory councils, for example) on what advocacy or messages and recommendations should be communicated with decision-makers.
- Engage children and young people in convenings and conferences with decision-makers. This should only happen if the children or young people are part of an ongoing participatory process to avoid the tokenism that comes from one-off events.
- Showcase children and young people's own advocacy and campaigning efforts through storytelling and communications.
- Co-design advocacy campaigns and strategies with children and young people.

Engaging children and young people in influencing strengthens individuals' and groups' advocacy, partnerships, and communications capacity creates connections between youth groups and decision-makers, and opens doors to decision-making spaces and places of power, ultimately resulting in powerful policy and practice change.^{91 92} In terms of the connectivity between participatory mechanisms, participatory influencing can be a natural lead-on from participatory research. It can also be a way to advocate for more and better resources to be used in a participatory grant-making process.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- An advocacy or campaigning strategy takes time to develop. If you plan to co-design a campaign, allocate several months, as well as dedicated advocacy and campaigning experts within your organization, to support the process.
- If your advocacy, partnership, or communication teams do not have youth engagement expertise, outsource it or ensure any youth leads within the organization are involved.
- Be clear about the room for decision-making. Does your organization have set influencing priorities for which you wish to consult on the strategic approach and tactics?
- If you have a general thematic area, identify child and youth groups that share your focus and explore a collaborative partnership with them, with funding attached.
- If you are engaging children and young people in digital influencing and communications who have little prior experience, provide training on risk management, digital safety, and civic space monitoring.
- If children or young people are being invited to advocate toward funders or funder networks, think about the unequal power dynamics and about how to navigate that in the physical or virtual space, e.g., will that child or young person be worrying about affecting current funding to their group or associated organization? How can you manage expectations so the child or young person does not feel personally responsible for fundraising?
 - Manage expectations and make it clear from the beginning if the event or influencing opportunity is a 'no pitch space', e.g., that participants are not allowed to pitch their own projects or organizations and what this means.
- Remember that influencing is not a one-off event. Inviting young people who have not been part of a previous or ongoing process to speak in one-off events or to join one-off consultations is tokenistic.
 - This does not need to be an ongoing participatory influencing process. Rather, it is important that the child or young person is engaged in your organization's work in some way and has a focal point so that there is support before, during, and after the engagement.
 - With a one-off event, efforts should be made to ensure the following:
 - The child or young person has autonomy over their talking points and questions.
 - The child or young person receives adequate financial and non-financial compensation (honorarium, expenses, training) and is able to attend the full conference or event where relevant (not just joining for their one speaking engagement or session).
 - The design process is participatory and sparks mutual learning and new insights that furthers the work on the topic.
 - The child or young person receives a comprehensive briefing and is supported as needed to prepare their talking points or intervention.
 - The child or young person is followed up with after to debrief, and support is provided to them, e.g., to share back to their groups.
 - The child or young person has an opportunity to meet with other young people and, where relevant, with decision-makers and other strategic stakeholders for network building opportunities.
 - If you are working with children and young people who have their own public profiles as activists or leaders, explore risk with them. If you showcase their work on your social media channels, might they face new or heightened risks from the publicity, e.g., trolling, community or government backlash, burn out?
 - If there are multiple opportunities to engage in influencing, are you sharing those opportunities to avoid the "celebritization" of children and young people?
 - When working with under 18s, ensure you have parental or guardian consent. If children are traveling internationally or taking part in public events, consider bringing two children from the same group or community for peer support.



INSPIRATION FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- [*The Count Me In! \(CMI!\) consortium*](#) is a strategic partner of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CMI! Is made up of: Mama Cash (MC), the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), CREA, Just Associates (JASS), and the Sister Funds or Urgent Action Fund (UAF) and Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-Africa). They have a [*dedicated advocacy strategy*](#), developed with feminist movements. While it is not clear if girls and young women were engaged explicitly, there are still lessons to be learned on the influencing role funders can play and the participatory potential of advocacy.
- Global Fund for Women's Adolescent Girls Advisory Council was formed to advise on strategy and grant-making but is also involved in their [*International Day of the Girl*](#) campaigning.
- In 2020, as part of effort to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous women in the review of the Beijing Platform for Action, the [*International Indigenous Women's Forum*](#) (FIMI) partnered with MADRE to develop a joint campaign "CEDAW⁹³ for Indigenous Women and Girls." This was an intergenerational effort with young, adult, and older women.
- In 2015, FRIDA partnered with environmental NGO, WEDO on the [*Young Feminist Fellowship for Climate Justice*](#). The aim was to mobilize young feminist groups to advocate in the run up to and during United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations and COP21.
- In 2022, [*With and for Girls Collective*](#), housed at Purposeful, is commissioning analysis of the Generation Equality financial commitments and engaging girls and young feminist groups through a participatory process to develop advocacy recommendations and key messages.
- When interviewed for this research, World Childhood Foundation USA shared that they have hired teenage youth bloggers to develop their communications content. They recognized that young people primarily get their information from social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. Therefore, donors need to rethink their communication strategy for youth engagement.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

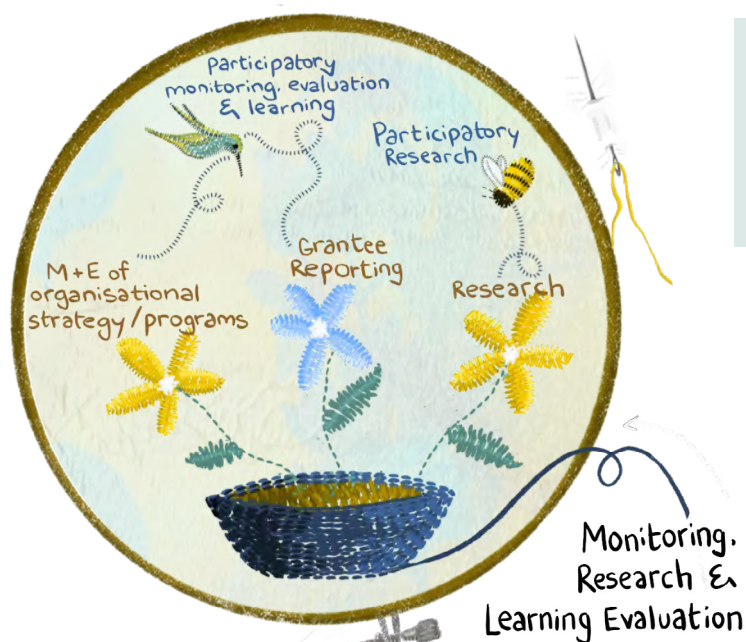
- Mama Cash and FRIDA, [*Girls to the Front*](#) - engaged girl advocates and activists as co-researchers.
- Let Girls Lead, [*Girl-Centered Advocacy Toolkit*](#) - comprehensive tool for supporting girl-led and centered advocacy as an NGO or funder.



MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND LEARNING



PARTICIPATORY MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING



"We need to deconstruct what funders count as impact, and challenge the notion that change is only equated with scale. Sometimes it is the smaller pockets of change that build meaningful power at an individual and collective level, create safe spaces to thrive in these volatile contexts, and fuel movements that make ripples in our history."⁹⁵

Funders have traditionally defined the standards for efficiency, impact, and effectiveness. These are often heavy, complex, and misaligned with how children and young people organize, making it difficult for groups "to showcase the real importance of their work."⁹⁴ Participatory monitoring, evaluation, and learning can help to shift power, build trust from the beginning of a program, and create a partnership of mutual respect. It also enables children and young people to define the terms and parameters by which they understand and document the change they are making. Participatory monitoring, evaluation, and learning can take many forms, which can be distilled into four participatory activities:

- Child- and youth-led or centered indicators for programs or organizational MEL.
- Participatory evaluations (of programs or of an organizational strategy).
- Grantee-led or centered reporting or documentation.
- Learning dialogues and spaces.

Ideally, children and young people are engaged in monitoring, evaluation, and learning from the beginning. By engaging children and young people in co-designing the monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach for a program, funders facilitate co-ownership and mutual respect. Further, if children and youth are receiving grants themselves, deciding together what needs to be reported on can strengthen collaboration between grantees and funders. In this approach, instead of extracting information from partners for monitoring, partners are invited to design the monitoring, evaluation, and learning process from the beginning so the system can be useful for their work too. For larger private funders that are not equipped to work directly with children and young people, a good option is to make it a criterion for external evaluators to only work with evaluators that are experienced in facilitating participatory processes with children and young people.⁹⁶ The benefits are clear. Moving from intensive monitoring to ongoing, **"learning-based dialogue yields richer and more relevant learnings."**⁹⁷ It also strengthens child- and youth-led organizations as the individuals involved bring these skills and capacities back to their groups.⁹⁸

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Decide which children and young people will be involved. This might be obvious if you are co-creating a monitoring and evaluation framework with grantee groups. Whether it's for an organizational strategy evaluation or evaluation of a grantmaking program, think about how to build a diverse and representative group.
- For child- and youth-led grantee groups, if the groups have interest and time, explore how to co-create indicators with grantee groups so that you decide together what needs to be reported on and why⁹⁹ and agree reporting approaches together (e.g., photo or video storytelling).
- If engaging children and young people who have little experience in monitoring and evaluation, consider providing training or peer-led capacity strengthening.¹⁰⁰
- Engage your monitoring, evaluation, and learning team/lead to support the process. They should have experience working with children or young people or be willing to undertake training.
- Hold learning dialogues throughout a project or program to create space for reflection, mutual learning, and feedback.
 - These can be spaces just for grantees, which provide opportunities for peer learning as well as reporting back, with predetermined areas for exploration depending on grantee's learning priorities.
 - These can be dialogue spaces between the funder and granted, recognizing the power imbalance here, to share feedback and experiences. These should include space for two-way conversation and not be extractive or purely to meet the needs of the funder.

- If you are an intermediary funder and are working with a grant from a source donor, ensure you have senior leadership and donor approval when developing alternative reporting and documentation approaches with grantees.
- When hiring participatory evaluators who are experienced working with children and young people, allow enough time and resources to engage in a meaningful process. If you're not sure, take advice from experts on how long the process should be - likely months or a full year. It is not possible to facilitate a meaningfully participatory evaluation process in one to two months.
- In addition to the budget considerations set out in [Section 3](#), grantee-centered reporting may also require additional budget and staff time supported within the grant to translate photos, videos, and other alternative reports into donor-compliant reports.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- Council of Europe - [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#).
- Dag Hammerskold, [Overcoming Barriers to Resourcing Youth Peacebuilders](#), includes findings and recommendations on youth-centered monitoring and evaluation.
- MamaCash, [New Perspectives, New Solutions: Funding Organising Led by Girls and Young Women](#) - report with practical reflections on supporting participatory monitoring and evaluations.
- Save the Children - [A series of 5 booklets with guidance on how to monitor and evaluate the quality and scope of children's participation \(with children\)](#).

SPOTLIGHT:

Mama Cash and partners¹⁰¹

Research into the impact of their communities of practice to facilitate participatory grant-making shows the potential for meaningful participatory monitoring and evaluation as part of that process. The community of practice comprised 11 women's funds and began in 2011. Mama Cash held conversations with girls and young women to shape what monitoring and evaluation systems and processes should look like. The women's funds involved, began testing and adopting new girl- and young women-centered ways to monitor progress, learning, and evaluation projects. This included: engaging girls in participatory evaluations of programs, tracking grantee groups' activity on social media, compiling reports from that to lessen the burden on them, and creating indicators with girl- and young women-led grantee groups. The approach of learning and testing through a community of practice is also interesting here, as it provides an ongoing space for learning, dialogue, and practice change.



PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

“Children and young people’s involvement is a fundamental requirement of ethical and protective practice that seeks to redress the power imbalances inherent within the relationships of child versus adult; service user versus service provider and research participant versus researcher/research institute.”¹⁰³

Child- and youth-led research provides a way to conduct research on sensitive issues, while building skills and capacities of children and young people as researchers themselves. It generates data that is richer, more credible, better communicated, and more impactful.¹⁰² Given the sensitivities of the topics at hand, it is important that all staff involved are deeply experienced or that experienced research consultants are hired to accompany the youth researchers and guide the process. Participatory research can be used to develop standalone research or can be connected to child- and youth-centered or led influencing efforts. In this case, children and young people are involved from the very beginning by identifying research topics based on their advocacy priorities. They then work collaboratively to design an advocacy strategy grounded in the research findings and insights.

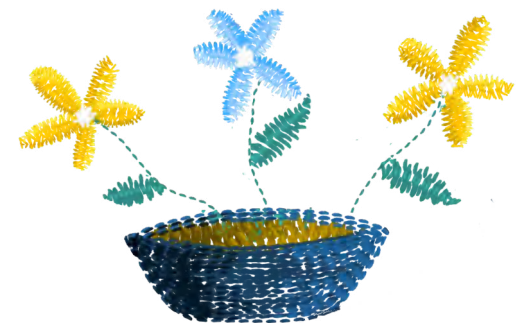
CONSIDERATIONS:

- Develop ethical research standards if you do not have these already.
- Decide the level of participation. Will children and young people lead from the beginning, including deciding on thematic areas? Or will they be collaborating on a research idea that has already been conceptualized?
- Decide whether this expertise is held in-house or needs to be outsourced to an experienced consultancy group.
- Follow a check-list, such as that developed by the Safer Young Lives Research Centre (see right).
- Develop a plan for recruiting a youth research team, e.g., a Youth Research Panel or hiring young research consultants.
- In addition to the budget considerations set out in [Section 3](#), participatory research also requires training for youth researchers including navigating their own trauma and working with those living with trauma.
- Given the sensitivity of working with children and young people with lived experience of an issue, all staff members should be deeply

experienced in navigating these issue areas including being aware of how to manage trauma and how to avoid triggering or retraumatizing the youth researchers and research participants.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- Safer Young Lives Research Centre [Working Paper](#) - includes a checklist for participatory research and [resources page](#) with tools, podcasts, and methodologies.
- Girl Effect’s [Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors \(TEGA\)](#) is a girl-led research approach.



SPOTLIGHT:

Anonymous large corporate children's foundation

The participation of children in research projects is meaningful partly because it stemmed from the history of designing with children. The team has a child-centered, play-focused approach in some of their research such as using puppets and games to understand children's perspectives. We spoke to a researcher who said, "*We are really about the children ... it's really at the heart of what we do.*" The research team also took the time to build rapport with the children and to recognize they are the experts: "*we had a child in the pilot for the research study and when we said, you know, you're really the expert on this. And he was like, yeah, I am, you know! You should be asking me! And he wanted to know the findings of the research, he was really empowered, you know?*" Conducting research with children also requires a deep understanding of the country and cultural context when working closely with families and guardians. One colleague shared that in some cultures it may not be appropriate to ask children about their thoughts or feelings so you have to be sensitive to that and ask families or community members about social norms.

"We had a child in the pilot for the research study and when we said, you know, you're really the expert on this. And he was like, 'yeah, I am, you know! You should be asking me!'"