

# Generation Equality Forum, One Year On: Shifting Power and Resources to Adolescent Girls and Youth-led Organisations

## Introduction

On 7th July 2022, the [Adolescent Girls Investment Plan](#) (AGIP) and [Plan International](#), together with adolescent and youth leaders, hosted an intergenerational dialogue with Action Coalition leaders titled '**Generation Equality Forum, One Year On: Shifting Power and Resources to Adolescent Girls and Youth-led Organisations**'.

The invite-only, intergenerational dialogue aimed to **explore what 'good' accountability for the implementation of the commitments made through the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) process looks like to girls**. Participants discussed in detail what more could be done to implement commitments to urgently shift resources and power to young feminist and girls' rights organisations and movements. Crucially, we aimed to curate a space to coalesce around opportunities and solutions – such as the 'Girls' Fund' – for accelerating these shifts.

**The dialogue built on GEF commitments made by AGIP and Plan International under the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership.** [Our commitments](#) are advocating for and supporting the inclusion, resourcing, and leadership of girls and young people in the GEF process. The dialogue was co-designed and co-facilitated by adolescent girls and youth leaders with support from the co-hosts, and encouraged active participation from the leaders of Action Coalition (AC) and UN Women (UNW).

**The intention of this summary report is to amplify the voices of those adolescent girls and young leaders who participated.** We hope that their recommendations, stories, activism, and lived experiences as the commitments from GE stakeholders as shared in this event will continue to shape the inclusion of girl and youth leaders in the GE process as it moves forward.

## I. Spoken word performance by Taylor Fang

Taylor Fang, a Women Deliver Young Leader, generously wrote and performed the poem 'She Speaks' to open our event. Taylor is the 2019-20 National Student Poet of the West, and a U.S. Presidential Scholar, Ashoka Young Changemaker, and Coca-Cola Scholar.

'She Speaks' is a poetic inspiration and description of girls' voice and leadership and set the tone perfectly for the dialogue to come. We hope that it inspires you as much as it inspired everyone present during the event. For a Spanish translation, please click [here](#).

### She Speaks

By Taylor Fang

*She speaks and her voice  
runs like floodwaters  
through the cities, like cold rain  
falling into the unfolded faces  
of leaves, trickling  
into troughs and rainwater pitchers  
and rubbed trinket boxes  
and open palms and hands wrinkled  
with a thousand prophecies,  
a thousand unforgotten histories.*

*She speaks and her voice  
creates a river that carries our hopes  
gently through the streets  
in tiny boats made of banana palms  
and balsa trees, and the water is clear,  
and rich, and deep,  
and we drink  
from the tide, tugging our mouths closer,  
our ears pressed to the sky*

*to hear the song  
of her voice, the unswerving  
rhythm of her words, her anthem  
of resistance sweeping  
through the entire night,  
a lattice of stars.  
She speaks and her voice  
grows the water  
until we cannot recognize shoreline  
from sky from reflection of cloud,  
until there is no thirst  
and no drought, and the ripples  
radiate outward, twisting rivers  
supine in jade and dappled oyster,  
shaping the soil into furrows  
that become—and have always been—  
our homes.  
She speaks and her voice  
creates a river  
that dreams the earth wide open.*



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## II. Intergenerational Dialogue in Break-out Groups

“Big commitments are being made but how funds are flowing to girls is lacking in clarity. [...] exclusion is coming from the fact that the feminist youth expertise and the adolescent girl's expertise that is derived from their experience is not appreciated enough. We are living in an age-centred society that does not believe that young girls can improve their knowledge and practices and give meaningful contribution to decision making processes and other initiatives because of their age. There is a lack of belief in girls' power.

- Mila, Adolescent Girl Leader, Kosovo

The main part of our event consisted of three parallel intergenerational dialogues, one focussing on 'Accountability for Adolescent Girls' and the other two on 'Resourcing Adolescent Girls and Youth-led Organisations'. AC leaders and UNW were allocated to the groups based on their [respective GEF commitments](#).

As the foundation for the dialogues, Xenia Kellner, co-founder of Young Feminist Europe, and Georgia Booth, an independent feminist consultant, presented preliminary findings from their **analysis of financial GEF commitments**, being carried out on behalf of [Purposeful](#). Please note that these are high-level observations due to be finalised later this year. Note-worthy points include:

- Many of the same commitments were made in multiple Action Coalitions that suggest **duplication**.
- Not all commitment makers who have made financial commitments have included an **amount**. This information is missing from most of the Private Sector Commitment makers.
- Many commitments, particularly for Economic Justice by governments, are **large financial commitments that are domestic policy commitments** e.g., national level implementation, and very little is committed to directly reach feminist organisations.
- Many of the financial commitments seem to be more like **programmes** implemented directly by commitment makers, rather than potential grants that directly reach youth-led organisations.
- Within the funding that has been made by a commitment maker, it is difficult to see **where it is going**, to whom (is it going to girls and young people) and with what **funders practices**.
- The only AC where you can see that 'better' [meaning 'best sector practice'] funding is part of the commitment is in AC6. That awareness is lacking from all other ACs.
- Many commitments have not been made over the period of 5 years. Many have been made **only for 1 or 2 years**. This is especially relevant about reporting and accountability. So, we anticipate a gap in the last 2 - 3 years of the process.
- Several commitments include resources for **existing funds** e.g., GPE. Additional analysis would be needed to understand whether this funding is going to girls and young people.
- The preliminary research shows that the Girls' Fund, housed at [Purposeful](#), is currently the only dedicated Generation Equality fund for girls and young feminists that is moving resources in ways that are both flexible and youth-centred.

During the break-out groups, AC Leaders and UNW were asked to give a brief update on their respective commitments:

- What is the **progress** on your respective AC's girl-centric commitment(s)?
- What kind of **challenges** are you experiencing as AC leaders and GEF conveners in terms of establishing an **accountability mechanism** for GEF commitments? Where are you creating **space for co-creation** with girls on accountability mechanisms?
- What kind of **challenges** are you experiencing as AC leaders in terms of **mobilising and moving the resources to girl leaders**, young feminist organisations and movements? What are your solutions to accelerate this?

We want to note that all AC and UNW leaders who attended shared insightful progress on their individual organisation's and/or AC's collective commitments. For the purpose of this report, we have summarised ACs' collective commitments and overall progress.

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Whilst the presentations showed that there are serious and inspiring intentions to shift power and resources to young feminist organisations, **there is still a lack of tangible outcomes for adolescent girls** in all their diversity across many ACs' collective commitments:

## Progress updates

- **Of the more than 2000 commitments made for GEF, 300+ commitments across the 6 ACs were made by organizations that self-identified as youth-led.** The current data does not have enough categories to indicate if commitments were all made by youth or adolescents, or if they targeted adolescents.
- **UNW are analysing the first GEF commitment reporting survey** as we wrote this summary report. It will allow for the first accountability assessment of GEF commitment gaps, challenges, possible solutions, and disaggregation of commitments and progress to be presented at the United Nations General Assembly in September this year ([76th UNGA](#)).
- Both AC leaders and UNW have expressed interest in mechanisms to **match financial commitment makers and donors with stakeholders with similar interests**, i.e., donors interested in funding SRHR are matched with youth-led and girl-led commitment makers.
- **UNW is currently identifying pilot projects across the regions to collaborate with civil society and country offices** that focus on youth and girl-led commitments, with the aim to showcase first results at the midway point next year.
- Whilst the [GEF Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Group](#) (nominations closed at the end of July 2022) has 2 allocated spaces for adolescent girl network/group representatives and 3 for youth-led organization representatives, so far, **a girl-centred accountability body, such as the UNW-committed 'Adolescent Girls Advisory Body' (AGAB), has not been established yet.**
- **GEF leaders are keen to link AC and GEF commitment progress with ongoing work at the global level**, such as the [Global Adolescent Summit \(WHO\)](#), [Women Deliver 2023 \(youth scholarship open till 1 Oct'22\)](#), and the [Secretary General's Summit of the Future](#).
- AC3 – Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), is in the process of developing a joint work plan covering advocacy, communications, and commitment maker engagement across the 4 actions that were identified. **AC3 has agreed to make meaningful youth engagement a key pillar of their work plan**, incorporating principles and feedback from young leaders, youth dialogues such as this event, and the [Young Feminist Manifesto](#).
- In discussion with Civil Society Organisation (CSO) leaders, AC3 leaders and the Global Fund for Women are exploring the set-up of a **complementary accountability mechanism for GEF that is CSO-led**. AC3 leaders are committed to ensuring that young people are central to this.
- **The only Action Coalition with clearly age-disaggregated actions is AC6 – Feminists Movements and Leaderships.** At present, no other Action Coalition has specific, collective targets for adolescent girls and young women. Many AC6 leaders have started implementing commitments centring adolescent girls and youth.
- Some collective commitments, e.g., **Global Alliance for Sustainable Feminist Movements**, an emerging multistakeholder initiative that aims towards increasing, sustaining, and improving financial and political support for women's rights and feminist organisations and movements emerging from AC6, will be launching soon.

## Challenges

- AC Leaders shared **difficulties in monitoring, accessing, and analysing commitments** made under their respective ACs.
- AC leaders shared **common challenges relating to both obtaining and distributing funds**:
  - Overall lack of clarity on commitments and funds committed
  - For big donors, specifically government donors, there are challenges in reaching national-level networks, with strict requirements to manage risk, fraud, and safeguarding, and difficulties in accurately tracking money going to young feminist and youth-led organisations, raised as particular internal barriers
  - A possible solution identified was to work with and through trusted intermediaries, such as FRIDA, With and For Girls, Mama Cash, and The Girls Fund
  - Commitment makers encounter funding inconsistencies and difficulties in securing resources
- The **GEF Accountability Framework is only just being implemented**. Open **questions on power dynamics, including disparities in access across the global north-south remain**, specifically on how AC leaders and commitment makers across the world can meaningfully contribute to this process, and how local perspectives and learning are translated at the global level.

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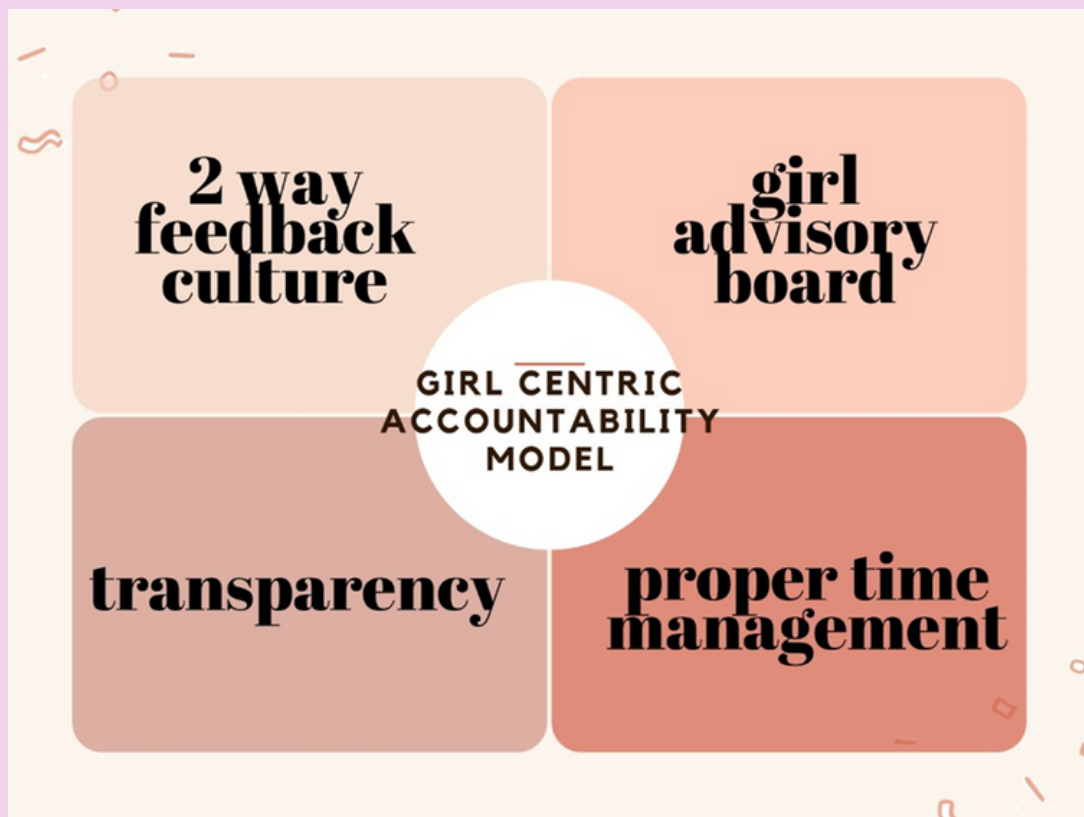
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## III. Possible solutions and best practices highlighted during the dialogue

To ensure the dialogues remained solution-oriented, in each group an adolescent girl or young leaders presented a piece of research including tangible proposal on their dialogue's theme.

### i. Girl-centered accountability model:



Mia, an adolescent girl leader from World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) Malaysia, shared an accountability model based on her experience of engaging in the GEF process so far. She emphasised four aspects that are key in designing an accountability process that is enabling for adolescent girls. The key aspects are:

1. **2-way feedback culture:** to enable free flow of inputs and reviews
2. **Girl advisory board:** consisting of girls from each organisation of ACs to hold AC leaders accountable to fulfilling their girl-centric commitments
3. **Transparency:** AC leaders working with girls at grassroots level to co-create processes and collectively decide on fund disbursement
4. **Proper time management:** to give enough time for organisations to recruit and onboard girls for leadership opportunities

“ I know it’s just a simple framework but as a 13-year-old, this is how I view the possible solution. I have come up with this framework after being the adolescent speaker, sharing my thoughts on multiple topics in Mexico and Paris Forums. I felt very fiery in the event itself but after the event I heard nothing. In the event, people clapping and telling me how wonderful my speech was, but after the event I heard nothing. Nobody e-mailed me or asked me to join their calls. It’s almost like it stops there. My advocacy stops at an unfulfilled promise. But I am hoping for more!

*Mia, Adolescent Girl Leader, Malaysia*

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## ii. Best practices for funding young feminists

Ipsita Dwivedi, a young feminist, illustrator, and researcher from India, presented the findings from the **'Young Feminists Blooming'** research. This participatory research was carried out in collaboration with 3 other young feminists and Plan International UK. It focuses on how institutional donors can effectively transform practices and transfer power and resources to young feminist organisations and movements. Some of the key recommendations from the research are:

1. **Building trust: to trust the work of young feminist organisations and movements**, their experiences and power to create social impact!
2. **Create more specialised funds** that cater to young feminists' priorities and understand their context-specific demands/needs.
3. To **decolonise the funding application process**. Making the process simple, accessible, and easy for young feminists to access resources. Calls for proposals should be available in their language, if possible.

Below are a set of four beautiful and vibrant illustrations capturing the findings of the research. The report is due to launch later this year.



The principles that you pull together here are super important for us to incorporate into the work plan and build on to the Young Feminist Manifesto that is already published.

Linda Weisert, CIFF, AC3 on BA and SRHR

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## iii. Example of a funding model for shifting GEF-committed resources directly to girls

[Purposeful](#) and [Plan International](#), with support from the Irish government, co-launched the 'Girls' Fund' in 2021. The 'Girls' Fund' is a collaborative fund that supports the collective action of girls and their allies in the Generation Equality process by providing over US\$180,000 in small, flexible grants by 2021 and a further US\$720,000 in multi-year funding until 2026.

**So far, the 'Girls' Fund' supported 28 girl-led groups globally.** All successful groups were involved in decision-making, reviewing, and evaluating blind applications. The 28 groups that were selected through this peer-led process received up to US\$5,000 each to engage with the Generation Equality process using innovative and creative activism and organising. Selected groups are working on everything from disability rights to trans rights, and sexual and reproductive health to climate change. They are building leadership, organising protests, delivering services in their communities, and lobbying governments. They are working in conflict zones, in dangerous political contexts, and in environments hostile to women, girls, and the LGBTQIA+ community. The funded groups have a range of different strategies to engage with Generation Equality.

**The demand from girl-led organisations is huge: the 2021 grant cycle was only able to give funds to 6% of applicants and needs more funders to sustain.** The 2022 grant cycle is launching soon. Read the first-year reporting [here](#).

## IV. Recommendations and demands from the Intergenerational Dialogue



Hearing our problems is not enough, we need resources.

*Darshana, Adolescent Girl Leader, Nepal*



**The recommendations and demands of adolescent girls and young leaders participating in the intergenerational dialogue – shared by many of their peers – were rich, insightful, and very clear.** We have consolidated them into a summary, followed by a set of illustrative quotes from the dialogues.

Summary of key recommendations and demands for shifting resources to adolescent girls and youth-led organisations:

- **Information:** resource mechanisms need to be made readily available, including sharing girl- and youth friendly information and processes, taking into account that not all young activists and youth-led organisations have access to reliable and regular information technology.
- **Accessibility:** girl- and youth-led organisations lack the formal structures often required by donors. To ensure resources are directly benefiting and implemented by adolescent girls and youth-led organisations, processes need to be accessible and unbureaucratic.
- **Inclusion:** decision-makers must recognise that different groups of adolescent girls and activists require different levels of support. We must commit to strategic inclusion of the most marginalised girls, who often live in the poorest, most remote, and/or indigenous communities.
- **Capacity and skills strengthening:** adolescent girls and youth-led organisations demand capacity strengthening and skills-training opportunities, especially for funding-related processes, such as proposal writing, budgeting, etc.
- **Participatory processes:** participatory grant making should be the norm, to empower those directly affected by the problems and to enable participation in decision-making. Donors should be trained in participatory grant making practices.
- **Safeguarding considerations:** funding processes must take into account the risk to personal and organisational safety when adolescent girls and youth-led organisations participate in public grant application processes, especially if funds are channeled through bigger organisations and/or public institutions.
- **Intermediary organisations:** often adolescent girls and youth-led organisations only receive a portion of the funding they applied for, as intermediary organisations allocate for significant overhead and/or cost-recovery amounts. Intermediary organisations should commit to minimal overheads when funding youth-led organisations.
- **Appreciation for lived experience:** donors, program developers, and researchers must recognise lived experience as valid experience for adolescent girls and youth-led organisations. We must trust that adolescent girls and youth-led organisations know their circumstances best, are capable of designing innovative and impactful solutions, and deserve to decide about interventions that concern them.

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We get the point about the fear of scam but if we are not given any chance to even get funding and are just involved in dialogues, it's not going to help. Hearing our problems is not enough, we need resources. We are ready to be accountable on things we will work on, but the problem is there is no resources for us to even get the projects started.

*Darshana, Adolescent Girl Leader, Nepal*

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“

Why don't we push for participatory grant making, where people who are affected by the problems are the ones who make decisions about the grant. Whichever organisations and funders have their hands on these commitments, should also have counsels and participatory grant making processes where adolescent girls and young people are the one who decide fate of these grants.

*Liz, Adolescent Girl Leader, Cameroon*

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“

It's very difficult for girls to get access to the GEF resources because they might not have access to internet [...] a lot of adolescent and youth leaders are taking their own time doing this job, but they don't have other resources to support their engagement in such processes.

*Khesavi, Adolescent Girl Leader, Mauritius*

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“

Some organisations receive funding for our work, but they only give us cut down funding and tell us that is what they have received for us. This is really hard. The funding hardly goes to the young people, specially young women.

*Mama, Adolescent Girl Leader, Mali*

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“

An accessible girls' funding is where girls are a part of the decision-making processes for the funding. So that their voices can be centered in the decisions to ensure that these funds actually reach the girls.

*Ivy, Adolescent Girl Leader and co-creator, Kenya*

”

“

There is a need for capacity building for youth and girl-led groups on things like proposal writing, understanding technical jargon because these processes are often confusing and intimidating for girls.

*Nina, Youth Leader, Kenya*

”

“

The basic issue that I have personally faced is that most of the organisations that fund you are willing to fund you only if you are a part of another organisation or you already have an on-going project. [...] Many international organisations are not willing to create youth task forces and engage with us on the ground. [...] The safety is also an issue in many countries as not all governments are democratic or even friendly. Seeking funding openly on social media or demanding our place may put us at huge risk. So, it is important that big international organisations also carry out regional and national level work with local governments and girl and youth leaders.

*Oindrila, Adolescent Girl Leader, India*

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## V. Open questions on accountability for adolescent girls

Unfortunately, there was not enough time during the intergenerational dialogue for girl leaders to have all their questions answered in a satisfactory manner. Furthermore, some AC leaders had to leave the space early, whilst others couldn't join. We have put together a consolidation of outstanding questions from adolescent girls and youth leaders which we invite all AC leaders and UNW to respond to. We hope these questions will guide discussions on accountability for adolescent girls going forward.

- On the Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Group: There is a need for co-design so that the structures and methods that are put in place are conducive to sharing power and creating safe and empowering spaces for the partnership to happen. **How are UNW committing to creating a truly co-designed process and how can girls and youth play an active and leading role in that?**
- **What accountability processes for adolescent girls and youth leaders have been put into place to date?** What are the challenges in centring girl and youth-led accountability? Is there a commitment from AC leads on how to fill in the information gaps as identified in the analysis? **How do we also pass on powers from the GEF Secretariat back to AC leaders for more co-creation processes to take place?**
- One of the core pillars for GEF was a commitment towards a transformative process. The current accountability framework focusses heavily on indicators. **How do indicator-led processes lead to internal accountability? Where are we demonstrating feminist processes and accountability that centres adolescent girls and youth leaders?**
- When there are so many stakeholders, **where are marginalised girls' and youths' voices and how are we going to strengthen them?** It is great to hear that AC leaders are taking thematic leadership, but where is the process leadership and how can we strengthen that?
- **What can we do to build capacity of youth leader to participate more in accountability spaces?**
- **Where are the spaces for leadership discussions in GEF beyond just individual commitment-maker role?**
- **What are AC leaders and UNW doing to showcase that committed funds are actually reaching adolescent girls and youth-led organisations?** How can accountability processes ensure that we understand clearly what categories resources are committed for (i.e., youth-led, youth-focussed, youth-beneficiaries).
- **How does donating or supporting already existing funds affect reporting and accountability around GEF?** Sometimes these funds are not necessarily a part of GEF – and often funds of bigger organisations are not always accessible to young people.
- For many ACs, we have only heard updates from 1 or 2 member organisations. It would be useful to also understand **how cohesively all members within each AC are able to work together and whether there are any challenges or barriers in doing so.**

## Summary

We strongly believe – and the contributions shared during this dialogue are proof – that there is no need to further collect ideas. Recommendations such as these have been repeatedly made through [numerous events such as this inter-generational dialogue](#), through the [Young Feminist Manifesto](#), and through wider opportunities that adolescent girls and youth leaders have taken to share their demands throughout the GEF process.

**Adolescent girls and young leaders have already shared their answers and solutions. We therefore urge all AC leaders and UNW to put adolescent girls' recommendations and demands into action, to achieve tangible, impactful, and lasting outcomes – with adolescent girls and young leaders at the centre.**

**AGIP and its members are keen to collaborate with interested leaders looking to explore the central themes of our event and this report – 'Shifting Power and Resources to Adolescent Girls and Youth-Led Organisations'.** To explore this further, please reach out to [Johanna Schulz](#) (AGIP Project Manager) directly.

As for our event and the content of this report, **we would like to extend a special thank you to all participants, presenters, interpreters, and to everyone who supported behind the scenes!**

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This event was co-designed and co-facilitated with adolescent girls and young leaders. A huge thank you goes to our moderators and co-creators: Ivy, Sarah, and Olivia.



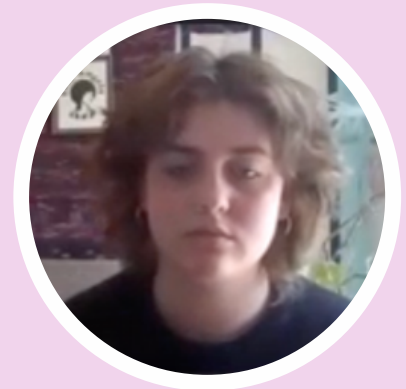
**IVY KUTSWA**

Akili Dada  
Young Leader



**SARAH ALHEIWIDI**

GAGE Youth Leader and  
Qualitative Researcher



**OLIVIA WAINWRIGHT**

Women Deliver  
Young Leader

If you wish to hear more about AGIP's future activities and events, [please register here](#), and don't hesitate to [contact the Secretariat](#) with any specific questions.

**Thank you again for your engagement – we look forward to connecting with you in the future!**

## Adolescent Girls Investment Plan



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*Additional resources shared during and/or after the event:*

1. A recommended framework for volunteerism and compensation for young people [https://civicus.org/documents/GVCYP\\_REPORT4.pdf](https://civicus.org/documents/GVCYP_REPORT4.pdf)
2. YWL Video and calls to action: <https://iwda.org.au/young-womens-leadership/>
3. Blog from the CSW panel that IWDA did with young women leaders in 2021: <https://iwda.org.au/how-young-women-led-their-communities-in-the-face-of-a-pandemic/>

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