

young feminist caucus

FEMINIST मंच

**STRENGTHENING
FEMINIST
INFRASTRUCTURE
in a
TIME OF DEMOCRATIC
BACKSLIDING**

The last decade has been marked by deepening inequalities, democratic backsliding, intensifying authoritarianism, religious fundamentalisms, militarization, and shrinking civic space. These developments are deeply interconnected with neoliberal economic systems that concentrate wealth, resources, and decision-making power in the hands of states, corporations, and elites while deepening dispossession and precarity across the Global South. This ecosystem is structured to reproduce and protect these unequal power relations.

Feminist movements are under increasing pressure to sustain collective infrastructures, political autonomy, and long-term organising capacity. While institutions increasingly adopted the language of participation and inclusion, these shifts rarely altered the distribution of power, resources, and decision-making authority, which remained concentrated within states, donors, corporations, and multilateral institutions.

Feminist Manch was born in 2022 in India through a Feminist Consultation Methodology and feminist action research process led by young women responding to these conditions. The collective emerged from a recognition that participation frameworks alone could not address unequal power relations. Young feminists require sustained political infrastructure to organise constituencies, build collective analysis, negotiate priorities, and exercise collective bargaining power for gender justice and human rights.

Building autonomous feminist infrastructure therefore became both a political necessity and a strategy for sustaining collective power amid the material and political constraints shaping feminist organizing.

As an autonomous collective, Feminist Manch seeks to strengthen the conditions through which young women, girls, and gender-diverse people, particularly those from structurally marginalized communities, can organize collectively, generate political analysis, and engage governance processes on their own terms. Informality enables autonomy, flexibility, and accountability to movements, while simultaneously exposing the collective to the precarity, invisibility, and resource constraints increasingly shaping feminist organizing.

Feminist Manch approaches knowledge production as a political process that locates expertise within communities themselves and challenges dominant systems that privilege institutional, technical, and elite forms of knowledge over lived experience. Through reflection and analysis, young feminists identify shared patterns of exclusion, articulate collective demands, and build a common political understanding of the systems shaping their lives, strengthening constituency power.

Through consultations, community dialogues, feminist participatory action research, and movement-rooted documentation, hundreds of young people across India have engaged in processes that connect lived experience in repressive contexts to intergenerational analysis, constituency-building, and political action.

These processes have contributed to local and national organizing efforts that strengthen constituency power, deepen collective political analysis, and connect community-based struggles to broader feminist advocacy and movement-building efforts.

As Feminist Manch evolved, its constituency-building and political education work increasingly informed engagement with regional and global decision-making spaces. This included interventions in processes, institutions, and policy architectures through which political priorities, resources, and governance arrangements are negotiated.

As founding members and co-convenors of the Young Feminist Caucus (YFC), Feminist Manch became part of a broader transnational effort to strengthen young feminist organizing across regional and multilateral spaces. Through advocacy coordination, constituency mobilization, political strategy, and coalition-building, the caucus works to strengthen young feminists as an organized political constituency capable of shaping political agendas, contesting exclusionary decision-making structures, and advancing feminist demands across governance processes.

As a member of the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Steering Committee coordinating civil society engagement in the Beijing+30 review process, Feminist Manch contributed to regional mobilization efforts that brought together more than 500 organizations, networks, and movements across 32 countries in the region. As the only informal young feminist-led collective on the Committee, Feminist Manch's role challenged dominant assumptions regarding expertise, legitimacy, representation, and whose knowledge counts within regional policy and governance processes. It raised broader questions about who is recognized as a political actor and how power is exercised within spaces often shaped by states, donors, and large civil society institutions.

The focus of this engagement remained rooted in creating conditions through which grassroots priorities could shape regional Beijing+30 outcomes, influence deliberations at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and strengthen political accountability to feminist movements, centering structurally marginalized constituencies whose organizing frequently takes place outside formal institutional structures. Through consultations, advocacy coordination, and cross-movement organizing, Feminist Manch and the Steering Committee members contributed to efforts to strengthen the influence of grassroots constituencies within regional decision-making processes and challenge the concentration of agenda-setting power within institutional spaces. The co-design of the Young Feminist Forum and efforts to secure formal decision-making roles for young feminists reflected broader efforts to redistribute influence within regional governance processes and deepen the collective bargaining power of young feminist constituencies.

The same political approach informs Feminist Manch's engagement within broader feminist movement spaces, including as Co-Convenors of the Women's Rights Caucus. Through these spaces, the collective contributes to strengthening connections between young feminist organizing and wider feminist struggles for gender justice and human rights.

This work strengthens intergenerational movement-building while advancing governance practices grounded in participation, accountability, and power-sharing.

Engagement within Generation Equality, including as a Commitment Maker of the Feminist Movements and Leadership Action Coalition, as well as within Youth2030 and other multilateral processes, has contributed to feminist debates on accountability, resourcing, representation, and power within global governance institutions. These interventions have been particularly important at a time when feminist movements continue to raise concerns about the gap between institutional commitments to participation and the redistribution of resources, authority, and decision-making power.

Feminist Manch forms part of a broader generation of feminist organizing that has emerged in response to intersecting crises of democracy, inequality, militarization, and shrinking civic space. Such efforts strengthen movement infrastructure and build collective bargaining power, creating pathways through which structurally marginalized constituencies can shape political priorities on their own terms. Democratic governance requires the redistribution of power, resources, and decision-making authority. Feminist movement-building remains central to that struggle.

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