

young feminist caucus

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POST-2026 VISION
towards
**YOUNG FEMINIST
MOVEMENTS &
LEADERSHIP**

INTRODUCTION

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF), conceptualized on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and officially launched in 2021 across Mexico City and Paris, represents one of the most ambitious multilateral architectures ever established to accelerate global gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Driven by an unprecedented intergenerational and multi-stakeholder governance model, the GEF mobilized an initial \$40 billion in financial pledges, which has subsequently expanded to \$50.3 billion as documented in the 2024 and 2026 reporting cycles. At the core of this global ecosystem is the Feminist Movements and Leadership Action Coalition (FML AC), a thematic pillar specifically tasked with uplifting feminist movements, protecting shrinking civic spaces, and advancing the substantive representation and decision-making power of women, girls, trans, intersex, and non-binary people across all sectors of society.

As the 2026 GEF milestone rapidly approaches, civil society organizations, accountability watchdogs, and strategic policy analysts must rigorously evaluate the initiative's empirical impact on feminist movements. The macroeconomic aggregates suggest a historic mobilization of capital and political will; however, a critical interrogation of the accountability data reveals profound structural disparities in resource distribution, pervasive bureaucratic barriers to grassroots participation, and a highly fragmented resourcing ecosystem that often reflects legacy administrative and funding models that hamper equitable distribution to frontline movements. In particular, youth-led and adolescent-girl-led organizations—despite universally serving as the primary drivers of frontline movement-building and crisis response—continue to face a severe funding gap estimated between \$577 million and \$652 million. This deficit highlights a critical disconnect between the rhetoric of multilateral commitments and the material realities experienced by grassroots activists.

Furthermore, the global context in which these movements operate has deteriorated significantly since the 2021 launch. The world is navigating intersecting polycrises, marked by escalating armed conflicts, climate emergencies, and a highly organized, well-funded anti-rights and anti-gender backlash. According to the latest assessments, not a single Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 indicator has been fully met, and based on current trajectories, it will take an estimated 137 years to eradicate extreme poverty for women and girls. Global parity in school enrollment has been nominally reached, yet 119.3 million girls remain entirely deprived of formal education, and child marriage is declining at a pace so sluggish that it will not be eradicated before the year 2092. Against this backdrop, the demands of young feminists for co-ownership of decisions, sustainable and flexible resourcing, trauma-informed practice, and the institutionalization of care as political infrastructure represent not merely aspirational ideals, but essential governance principles required to salvage the 2030 Agenda.



The Feminist Movements and Leadership Action Coalition has fundamentally attempted to redefine global paradigms for gender equality advocacy by actively shifting the focal point from traditional, siloed, and top-down bilateral programming toward sustained, intersectional movement-building. The coalition's guiding vision mandates that by 2026, feminist activists, women human rights defenders, and their organizations must be fully resourced, politically supported, and structurally integrated into decision-making architectures at all levels. The impact of the GEF process on feminist movements can be observed across three primary dimensions: the facilitation of collective policy advocacy, the mobilization of multi-stakeholder solidarity in times of crisis, and the gradual institutionalization of core feminist principles within traditionally rigid bureaucratic spaces.

To objectively assess the impact of GEF on feminist movements, accountability mechanisms must rigorously scrutinize the financial architecture supporting these commitments. The 2026 Financial Commitments Analysis Report provides a highly granular view of the \$50.3 billion pledged towards GEF. While this aggregate figure represents a historic achievement in mobilizing resources for gender equality, the disbursement methodologies and recipient profiles reveal a deeply fragmented resourcing ecosystem.

AGGREGATE PLEDGES & DISBURSEMENTS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The financial landscape of the Generation Equality Forum is overwhelmingly dominated by state and private sector actors, while civil society and youth-led organizations control only a minute fraction of the total capital. The structural inequities are evident in the distribution of pledged, secured, and spent funds across different constituencies.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	TOTAL PLEDGED	TOTAL SECURED	TOTAL SPENT	PRIMARY FINANCIAL MECHANISM
Governments	\$22.2 Billion	\$13.2 Billion	\$9.1 Billion	Domestic public budgets, legislative appropriations
Private Sector	\$12.4 Billion	\$11.3 Billion	\$10.3 Billion	Internal supply chains, equity investments
Multilaterals	\$11.7 Billion	\$13.2 Billion	\$548 Million	Project-specific grants, multi-donor pooled funds
Philanthropy	\$3.5 Billion	\$2.6 Billion	\$1.8 Billion	Flexible grants, endowment drawdowns
Civil Society	\$403 Million	\$135 Million	\$97 Million	In-kind contributions, external grants
Youth-Led Organizations	\$7.5 Million	N/A	\$100,000	Volunteer mobilization, micro-grants

**Refers to actual disbursements reaching implementing partners.*

ANALYZING THE STRUCTURAL INEQUITIES IN THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

The data indicates that 78 percent of secured government funding (\$10.4 billion) flows entirely through domestic public budget allocations. While this demonstrates commendable institutional ownership and political will to embed gender equality into national systems, it concurrently means that the vast majority of government pledges are locked within national boundaries. These funds rarely reach transnational feminist movements, global advocacy networks, or grassroots organizations operating in the Global South under restrictive regimes. Furthermore, government spending is highly uneven across regions; North America accounts for the majority of funds disbursed, while only 15 percent of the \$9.7 billion pledged to all other regions has been spent, risking the widening of regional gaps.

Private sector financing is similarly characterized by severe concentration.

A staggering 99 percent of the \$12.4 billion pledged by the private sector originates from just two entities: Procter & Gamble (\$10 billion focused on gender-responsive corporate spending across its supply chain) and Amarthia (\$2.3 billion for women-led micro-enterprises in Indonesia). While these initiatives generate substantial economic impact, the lack of broad-based private sector participation in funding feminist civil society is glaring. Only \$200,000 in private sector funding was reported as directly pledged to youth- or adolescent-led organizations.

For civil society, the funding landscape is actively shrinking. CSO pledges fell from \$475 million in 2023 to \$403 million in 2024, with nearly half of the resources originating from just two organizations (the Equality Fund and EngenderHealth). This contraction threatens the diversity of the civil society ecosystem, limits the ability of grassroots women's rights organizations to sustain long-term work, and weakens local ownership of gender equality initiatives.

THE DECISION-MAKING POWER FINANCIAL GAP

The disparity in funding is most acutely observed in initiatives dedicated to expanding full and equal decision-making power. Under the FML commitments focused on leadership, civic space, and participation, severe financial gaps persist between what has been pledged and what has actually reached implementing partners.

STAKEHOLDER	PLEGED FOR DECISION-MAKING	SPENT / IMPLEMENTED	FINANCIAL GAP
Governments	\$5.7 Billion	\$2.8 Billion	\$2.9 Billion
Multilaterals	\$525.5 Million	\$53.5 Million	\$472 Million
Civil Society	\$351.2 Million	\$136.5 Million	\$214.7 Million
Philanthropy	\$605 Million	\$857,600	\$604.1 Million

The disbursement gap in leadership funding highlights the need to align institutional risk frameworks with flexible, trust-based funding models that support grassroots leadership.



PREREQUISITES FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: TANGIBLE NEEDS

For youth-led and adolescent-led organizations to transition from peripheral participants to meaningful co-architects of processes like the Generation Equality Forum, the multilateral ecosystem must address specific tangible deficits.

FLEXIBLE, CORE, AND MULTI-YEAR RESOURCING

The most urgent tangible need for youth-led organizations is immediate access to direct, flexible, and predictable financing. Despite driving high-impact results, youth- and adolescent-led organizations mobilized only \$7.48 million in pledges, while reporting a staggering funding gap of \$577 million to \$652 million required to fulfill their own Generation Equality commitments.

Current funding architectures prioritize restrictive, project-specific grants that demand burdensome administrative reporting. Bureaucratic hurdles are consistently cited as the number one barrier to disbursement across all stakeholder groups. For youth collectives, navigating labyrinthine United Nations or governmental reporting portals constitutes massive, uncompensated labor. To engage meaningfully, youth-led organizations require unrestricted core funding that allows them to pay staff, rent safe physical spaces, maintain digital security infrastructure, and respond agilely to emerging crises without requiring prior donor authorization for every budget reallocation.

ACCESSIBLE MULTILATERAL PLATFORMS AND VISA JUSTICE

The physical and digital infrastructure of multilateralism often operates as a mechanism of exclusion. Tangible engagement requires the dismantling of logistical and geographic barriers. This includes providing fully funded travel, accommodations, and per diems for young feminists from the Global South to attend global convenings, ensuring they are not excluded by the prohibitive costs of international participation. Furthermore, "visa justice" must be prioritized. Multilateral hosts and United Nations agencies must actively facilitate immigration processes, ensuring that grassroots activists are not routinely denied entry to decision-making tables due to discriminatory border regimes and passport inequalities.

LANGUAGE JUSTICE AND TRANSLATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Multilingual organizing is a deliberate political act. According to the FML AC foundational principles, Language Justice recognizes that linguistic diversity is absolutely fundamental to achieving meaningful participation and power-sharing.

When forums default to English or dominant colonial languages, they systematically marginalize grassroots activists, particularly Indigenous youth and rural organizers. Tangible engagement requires robust, continuous translation and interpretation infrastructure, treating language accessibility as a core tool for inclusive feminist democracy rather than an expensive technical afterthought.

DATA SOVEREIGNTY AND SKILLS CAPACITY BUILDING

Youth-led organizations require tangible support to build their internal capacities regarding data sovereignty and monitoring frameworks. The burden of generating evidence to satisfy donor requirements often distracts from frontline activism. Meaningful engagement requires the simplification of reporting standards and the adoption of movement-defined accountability metrics that capture qualitative relational work, rather than forcing grassroots collectives to conform to rigid, donor-centric quantitative indicators. Providing technical assistance in a non-extractive manner allows youth organizations to retain ownership of their data and utilize it for their own strategic advocacy.

PREREQUISITES FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: INTANGIBLE NEEDS

Beyond financial capital and logistical resources, the intangible prerequisites for youth engagement dictate whether a multilateral process is genuinely transformative or dangerously extractive. Governance models, emotional labor, and power dynamics must be actively interrogated.

DECOLONIALITY AND THE RECOGNITION OF POLITICAL AGENCY

The foundational principle of Decoloniality draws direct attention to the historical extraction of knowledge, legitimacy, and resources from the Global South. For young feminists, engaging in GEF requires multilateral institutions to shift from traditional beneficiary-focused models toward frameworks that recognize young feminists as equal strategic partners and political actors. Youth must be recognized not merely as "voices of the future" or vulnerable beneficiaries requiring salvation, but as present-day political actors & leaders with immediate agency. Meaningful engagement necessitates redistributive approaches that actively restore ownership and agenda-setting power to young feminists, allowing them to define the parameters of the debate rather than responding to predetermined institutional agendas.

CARE AS GOVERNANCE AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Young feminists organize in the context of multiple, intersecting crises—including climate emergencies, armed conflict, and a vicious anti-gender & SRHR backlash that routinely subjects them to surveillance, criminalization, and digital violence. Consequently, the emotional and psychological toll of activism is immense. The FML AC principle of Care as Governance dictates that all decision-making and accountability processes must be fundamentally grounded in empathy and trauma-informed practice.

Care cannot be relegated to a peripheral wellness concern or an individualized responsibility; it must be institutionalized as a core governance principle. This means designing multilateral processes that respect capacity limits, reject the normalization of unpaid and exhausted activist labor, and actively fund rest, psychosocial support, and collective healing as legitimate, necessary programmatic expenditures.

INTERGENERATIONAL POWER-SHARING AND CO-LEADERSHIP

The FML Action Coalition recognizes that feminist movements thrive on equitable, intergenerational power-sharing. Too often, however, these spaces prioritize institutional tenure over lived experience. Meaningful youth engagement requires dismantling these hierarchies to finally transition from token consultation to genuine structural co-ownership.

Youth must be integrated through authentic co-leadership mechanisms, where they hold veto power, agenda-setting capabilities, and equal voting rights on steering committees and core groups. It requires older feminists and institutional allies to move beyond "tick-box" intersectionality and practice mutual mentorship—recognizing that young feminists possess distinct, lived-experience-based expertise that is equally valid to decades of institutional tenure. As demanded by the Young Feminist Manifesto, institutions must pivot from top-down consultative models to architectures of true co-ownership.

NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS AS EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

A critical, yet historically under-theorized, intangible need involves the navigation of leadership transitions within feminist movements. Intergenerational transitions are deeply emotional, political, and relational processes. As young feminists "age out" of youth-specific funding categories or identity brackets (e.g., crossing the age of 30 or 35), they often face an "age cliff" that triggers feelings of instability, loss of political identity, and systemic displacement.

Supporting youth-led organizations means creating graceful, financially supported pathways for leadership transitions. This requires movements and donors to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, provide emotional and financial support for exiting leaders, and ensure that institutional memory is preserved. A failure to resource and emotionally support these transitions frequently leads to organizational collapse and severe burnout among departing youth leaders, weakening the broader feminist ecosystem.

ARCHITECTING THE POST-2026 VISION AND STRATEGY

As the Generation Equality initiative maps its strategic trajectory beyond the initial 2026 milestone, an overwhelming 94 percent of Commitment Makers recommend scaling the initiative as a permanent accelerator for the 2030 Agenda. For civil society, youth leaders, and feminist movement architects, the post-2026 strategy must pivot decisively from the mere aggregation of financial pledges toward the enforcement of structural accountability, ecosystem resilience, and the radical redistribution of power. The strategic roadmap for the post-2026 era must integrate the following core imperatives.

BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST THE ANTI-RIGHTS BACKLASH

The post-2026 strategy must proactively counter the highly organized and well-funded anti-rights and anti-gender backlash. Multilateral frameworks must establish rapid-response, flexible funding mechanisms to protect feminist organizers facing criminalization, surveillance, and digital violence. Accountability structures must actively monitor and challenge both state and non-state actors attempting to dismantle progress on the 2030 Agenda and SDG 5 indicators.

SHIFTING POWER AND MANDATING DIRECT LOCAL FUNDING

The glaring disparity between the \$50.3 billion pledged globally and the chronic underfunding of grassroots feminist and youth-led groups must be rectified. The post-2026 framework must institute mandatory, trackable funding targets, stipulating that a specific, significant percentage of all multilateral and philanthropic GEF pledges be channeled directly to local, youth-led, and Global South feminist organizations, deliberately bypassing Northern intermediary NGOs that often absorb substantial overhead costs. The strategy must incentivize trust-based philanthropy, unrestricted core funding, and multi-year grants as the primary instruments of feminist financing, moving away from restrictive, short-term projectization.



INSTITUTIONALIZING INTERGENERATIONAL CO-GOVERNANCE AND ALIGNMENT WITH GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

The ad-hoc inclusion of youth that characterized early multilateral processes must be permanently retired. The post-2026 vision must formally institutionalize intergenerational co-governance within all United Nations and GEF structures. This includes mandating youth representation on all funding allocation boards, policy drafting committees, and accountability tribunals.

Furthermore, the post-2026 strategy must tightly align with the outcomes of the Pact for the Future, the Financing for Development (FfD4) agenda, and the Beijing+30 review. This includes utilizing SDG Indicator 5.c.1 (the tracking and publishing of public allocations for gender equality) as a central benchmark to hold governments accountable for translating high-level political commitments into transparent budgetary action.

GEF must adopt the FML principles of Language Justice and Care as Governance across all its operations to ensure that participation remains deeply equitable, sustainable, and aligned with the normative frameworks of the Beijing Platform for Action.

CONCLUSION

The Generation Equality Forum has undeniably catalyzed a historic mobilization of capital and political will, establishing a new multilateral paradigm for gender equality. Through the Feminist Movements and Leadership Action Coalition, the initiative has successfully elevated the critical importance of resourcing movements, defending civic space, and advancing feminist co-leadership on the global stage.

The true legacy of the Generation Equality Forum will be determined by its capacity to adapt. By dismantling logistical barriers, prioritizing core funding for grassroots networks, and operationalizing Care as Governance, the multilateral system can successfully equip young feminist movements to secure the 2030 Agenda.

For youth-led, girl-led, and movement-led organizations to engage meaningfully in the post-2026 GEF landscape, they require far more than an invitation to a consultative panel. Tangibly, they require the provision of unrestricted, multi-year core funding; the dismantling of linguistic and logistical barriers through language and visa justice; and the operationalization of data sovereignty. Intangibly, they demand the institutionalization of decoloniality, trauma-informed care as a governance principle, and the emotional and political support necessary to navigate the complex realities of intergenerational power-sharing and leadership transitions.

As the 2030 deadline approaches, the ultimate success of the Generation Equality initiative will not be measured by the aggregate billions pledged, but by its capacity to radically redistribute power, reshape multilateral governance, and place resources directly into the hands of the young feminist movements that are architecting the future of global justice.

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