

Global Fund for Children in Africa

Ph: Dakana Home Based Care

Global Fund for Children (GFC) partners with community-based organizations around the world to help children and youth reach their full potential and advance their rights. By pairing flexible funding with a range of support services and access to networks that can bring about social change, we seed transformative, cost-efficient solutions that help our partners to grow stronger and more effective in their work. With more than two decades of experience investing in grassroots, youth-centered organizations in Africa, GFC is committed to supporting new generations of African leaders.

Africa faces persistent challenges while offering vast opportunities. Home to [226 million people ages 15-24](#), the region has the youngest population in the world. With the population expected to double within the next half century, there is an urgent need for innovative, sustainable interventions that address barriers to child and youth empowerment, ensuring that their collective futures are secured. Rates of hazardous child labor, early marriage, and physical and sexual abuse remain high throughout Africa, with young girls disproportionately affected. The rate of violence and exploitation against girls, compounded with relatively few civic freedoms for women, demonstrates the pervasive gender inequity across the region.

Home to this growing youth population, Africa is poised to create an entirely new development path, harnessing the potential of its resources and its people. Strategic investments in education, health, and youth empowerment continue to bear fruit as evidenced by the scores of youth-led innovations emerging from the continent. When given the chance, youth have pushed boundaries in service of their communities by pioneering ideas and leveraging media-based technologies to advance change.

Current initiatives

Improved literacy & education for girls

This four-year initiative supports a cohort of community-based organizations to improve literacy and educational opportunities for children, especially girls, in Ghana and Togo. Throughout the grant period, GFC has provided flexible grants and capacity development assistance to eight organizations to promote and enhance girls' education in their communities.



Ph: Giovanni Okot

Reducing violence against young women & girls

GFC launched a two-year pilot in late 2019 to support youth-led and women-led organizations working to shift patriarchal norms, and to empower adolescent girls to exercise agency and autonomy over their bodies and lives. Throughout the pilot, GFC will seek to support partners in Liberia and Sierra Leone to improve their effectiveness in addressing violence against women and girls, as well as other related issues, through service delivery and advocacy.

Girls' wellbeing & empowerment

GFC supports five organizations to improve their capacity to provide access to education and skill-building opportunities for children and youth, particularly adolescent girls in Kenya and South Africa. The initiative develops the capacities of the organizations to support adolescent girls in building skills for brighter futures.

Strengthening support services for girls' education

Over five years, GFC has supported 15 girl-focused, community-based organizations to improve their capacities in removing obstacles that make it difficult for girls to stay in school and receive a quality education. This regional initiative supports organizations in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Senegal.

Additionally, GFC has worked with eight local organizations across Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia to help increase enrollment of school-age mothers in alternative and second chance education programs, in addition to providing quality childcare and early childhood education to their young children.

Unlocking girls' potential in post-conflict areas

GFC currently supports four organizations in Uganda that work to empower children and youth, particularly girls, who were affected by the country's two-decade-long conflict. GFC primarily works with these organizations to improve their capacities to provide psychosocial support, enabling their participants to manage their post-war traumas through coping mechanisms. These organizations also facilitate access to secondary education, livelihood vocational trainings, and entrepreneurial skill-building initiatives, which help girls to increase their confidence, prepare for future careers, and become independent.



Strategic directions for the future

GFC is poised to continue to support locally based actors to address persistent challenges in Africa while taking advantage of significant opportunities. Through a focus on youth empowerment and agency, gender equity, youth leadership development, opportunity through education (including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education), skills training, and entrepreneurship, our partners can empower Africa's future generations and create spaces for them to learn, reflect, and obtain meaningful livelihoods that enable them thrive. They can come together, form powerful networks, and draw inspiration from their peers to advocate for change, be change agents themselves, protect their rights, and live up to their full potential.

Success in school & beyond

Education is a transformative tool in changing the lives of children, families, and communities. However, despite tremendous efforts to increase educational access in the region, more work remains to make education relevant to the lives and aspirations of young people in Africa. Ensuring children and youth acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to succeed is crucial to securing their futures. Supporting formal and informal education structures can reinforce what young people learn and improve the effectiveness of how they learn it. This is a key strategy in preparing youth for employment and entrepreneurship in a dynamic and globalized labor market.



Ph: Rosie Hallam / Financial Times

Youth civic engagement & activism

As citizens of the youngest continent, Africa's young people are increasingly becoming powerful agents of change on the issues that affect their lives. They need support to build leadership skills for more effective participation, both individually and as members of youth-centered and -led organizations and movements. It is crucial for the region's development that youth are fully engaged: their voices must be heard and they must have the agency to ensure that their inherent rights are recognized and upheld. To strengthen youth civic engagement and activism, GFC can support organizations that teach youth how to engage effectively with their communities and that provide them with tools to strengthen their activism and leadership skills.

Economic empowerment & meaningful livelihoods

A large proportion of young people in the region are either unemployed or in vulnerable employment, with young women and youth with disabilities at a greater disadvantage. Much of youth unemployment in Africa is attributed to skills constraints, where individuals lack the appropriate skills to respond to the demands of employers. Many educated young people lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment. Community-based actors require support to improve youth's economic engagement to ensure that Africa can harness the potential of young people to advance development for themselves and their nations.



Young people in technology

Across the region, digital technologies are transforming the market, helping to solve market challenges, bridge gaps, and provide innovative solutions. Despite advances, only [11% of the world's Internet subscribers are Africans, and less than 40% of Africans use the Internet](#). As such, the overall use and awareness of what technology can do is extremely low in Africa. GFC can support organizations working in this space to put technology in the hands of disadvantaged youth, particularly girls, and provide them an opportunity to create solutions for their communities.

Combating violence against young women & girls

Violence, abuse, and exploitation of children in Africa is widespread. The region is home to a quarter of all girl victims of female genital cutting/mutilation. One in ten adolescent girls is raped or sexually abused, and early forced marriage affects four in ten girls prior to their 18th birthday. The region also experiences the [highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the world](#). Organizations working to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation need support to push back on harmful traditional and social practices that perpetuate these issues. Moreover, organizations working to change attitudes about gender, including those that work with boys and young men to dismantle harmful norms and practices, need support.

Safe spaces for children and youth

Physical, sexual, and psychological violence is a significant problem in Africa. It occurs in the home, at schools, in workplaces, and in the community. Although it can affect any young person, [girls are disproportionately affected](#). Supporting organizations to more effectively promote child-rights education is essential and will improve how parents, teachers, and community members can work together to promote nonviolent behavior and to empower children to take positive action against violence that they or their peers experience.



Supporting forcibly displaced young people

Particularly in eastern Africa, droves of migrants are seeking refuge in countries and communities other than their own. According to the United Nations, more than a quarter of the global refugee population resides in Africa – over half of this population is children and youth between the ages of 15 and 24. These youth need support and protection throughout the resettlement process as they seek to rebuild their lives and create new avenues to a better future.

Combatting child labor

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of children engaged in hazardous labor in the world, with [one in five children on the continent employed against their will](#) in quarries, farms, and mines. Child workers rarely enroll in school, or they drop out prior to completion, and often fall into the intergenerational cycle of low education and dangerous work. Children who are victim to these practices are robbed of their childhood, leading to mental health, social, and economic challenges later in life.

Priority countries

West Africa

Anglophone countries:

Gambia
Ghana
Liberia
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

Francophone countries:

Burkina Faso
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Mali (Western)
Togo

East Africa

Eritrea
Ethiopia
Kenya
Rwanda
Tanzania
Uganda

Southern Africa

Botswana
Eswatini
Lesotho
Namibia
South Africa
Zambia

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