



# SPARK FUND

**The Spark Fund envisions a more inclusive and just world, shaped by young people who are empowered to tackle injustice and inequality and drive transformational change.**

## **What is it and how is it done?**

The Spark Fund is a youth-led fund - designed and decided by youth - that invests in transformational change to build a more inclusive post-pandemic world by:

1. #ShiftingThePower to youth through a trust-based, participatory grantmaking process
2. Building new connections between youth leaders and groups tackling inequality and injustice
3. Utilizing digital technologies to allow youth leaders to experiment, collaborate and learn
4. Involving youth at every step of the decision-making process.

## **Year 1: What's been done so far**

- 4 youth-led rounds of the fund were piloted in Latin America, Southern Africa, Europe and Eurasia and South Asia (13 countries represented)
- 790 applications received globally, many from organizations which have never received grant funding before
- 76% of the 40 youth panelists were new to making funding decisions

- \$546,000 of flexible funds for 56 groups, with grant sizes ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 were granted by youth to youth.<sup>1</sup>

Our new grantee partners are diverse – working across the fields of climate justice, gender equity, disability rights, LGBTQ+ rights and education among many others – and we are excited about the community level impact that this funding will support. Already, Spark Fund grants are supporting peacebuilding work at the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the fight to end period poverty in Lesotho, building climate resilience in Bangladesh and safeguarding indigenous cultures and communities in Mexico.

## Learning approach:

The complex and systemic issues that the Spark Fund seeks to address, require a flexible approach to learning. We prioritize iterative, flexible and youth-led learning that allows us to test new approaches, make small and cumulative changes, recognize what is and is not working quickly, and take smart and strategic risks. We are committed to encouraging curiosity, giving space for youth and community leadership and experience and creating a culture where it is safe to learn from failure as well as success.

Our focus in the first year of the pilot has been on implementation, data collection and iteration. We are excited to find compelling ways to regularly share our rich and ongoing learning journey far beyond our key stakeholders, recognizing that transparency and mutual learning beyond our own work is vital to create the transformational change that we seek.

Our shared values of youth leadership, trust, partnership, inclusion, mutual learning and wellbeing guide our approach to learning.

<sup>1</sup> Each partner is scheduled to receive two-years of funding. The amount listed above includes just the first-year grant.

## Youth Panelists



Khalid holds a colleague's baby while attending a summit in April 2022. © GFC

Youth Panels comprised of 10-12 young people representing their communities were set up to establish grantmaking guidelines and select Spark Fund recipients.

*"You have young people that are very smart and energetic, so, it took a lot of time to build the process, because we were looking at, should we have organizations that are registered or not? Should we have youth-led groups or youth-focused groups? We had a debate on that for a long number of days. Should we talk about the [Sustainable Development Goals] or special issues?"*

*It was tough to agree, but the beautiful thing was, no matter what happened, we had a point to converge, we had a point to be flexible with our ideas to see how we can have a meeting point."*

**Khalid Ahmad Tamu; Spark Fund Panelist, Sierra Leone**

## Role of Tech



A young person participating in Spark Fund partner Feminismd's event in Moldova. © Feminismd

The Spark Fund is experimenting with digital technology to make the grantmaking process more inclusive and efficient.

Youth panelists used an innovative voting platform designed by *Shared Nation* to review eligible applications.

Panelists favorited their top applicants who then moved on to a pairwise voting round.

Panelists used this shortlist of applicants for final discussion and decision-making.

## What's next:

The possibilities are limited only by the interests and imaginations of the youth who lead the Spark Fund. Our intention is to expand the Fund to meet the demands of the youth applying for its support. At its current size, the fund is only able to fund a small fraction of applications (<10% in the first round). We envision building the Spark Fund into a resource that can reliably meet and support youth-led innovations in every corner of the globe.

In the short-term, based on feedback from our panels and applicants, we would like to launch new thematic rounds of the Fund focused on:

- Global Climate Resilience and Adaptation
- Healthy Masculinities and Boys in the American South, the UK and South Africa
- Global Gender Equity and Girls-led Innovation and Advocacy
- LGBTQ+ advocacy and rights building

## Meeting the demands of Youth:

Each full round of the Spark Fund costs approximately \$500,000 to run. This includes two years of grants and capacity development and networking support to each grantee (10-12 per region), costs to support the young grant maker panelists, maintaining the technical voting platform, and programmatic staffing.

The Spark Fund is a funder collaborative, with core funding for the pilot provided by the Avast Foundation. There is room for additional funders to join the collaborative and with the core funding secured, future donations can be used to launch new rounds focused on specific themes and/or geographies.

Please reach out to [sparkfund@globalfundforchildren.org](mailto:sparkfund@globalfundforchildren.org) to learn more.

## Additional Spark Fund Resources:

[The Spark Fund | Global Fund for Children](#)

