

Grassroots Grantmaking at Global Fund for Children

Global Fund for Children (GFC) partners with community-based organizations around the world, helping them deepen their impact on the lives of children and young people, and strengthening their capacity for social change. Since 1997, we have invested over \$63 million in more than 1,000 partner organizations across 90 countries.

Our role as a global intermediary funder

We fill a gap in philanthropy by connecting changemakers with funders globally, moving resources in ways that many cannot due to capacity or regulations. We mobilize resources from individuals, trusts, and family, corporate, and private foundations, investing them in organizations and young people dedicated to creating systemic change. In this way, we provide small organizations with rare flexible, long-term support.

Alongside our role as an intermediary funder, our partners identify our non-financial resources as some of our most valuable assets. We accompany partners on their journeys as they navigate new ideas and challenges. We also convene partners to drive shared learning and to strengthen solidarity. We connect our partners with global ecosystems to amplify children's rights and grassroots change.

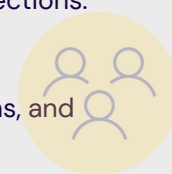
By pairing flexible funding with targeted capacity strengthening, we support changemakers to shift social norms, policies, and practices to foster lasting change for children and young people.

Who we fund

GFC invests in community changemakers who advance the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in relation to our key focus areas of education, gender justice, youth power, climate resilience, safety and wellbeing, and solidarity in emergencies. The partners we fund work tirelessly and courageously on these issues but often lack access to funding, visibility, and connections.

They include:

- Youth-led collectives, organizations, and networks
- Adult-led youth-centered groups, organizations, and networks
- Individual changemakers, especially children, adolescents, and young people



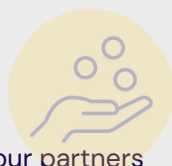
We are the first flexible institutional donor for more than 80% of our partners according to our 2022–2023 partner survey. Among our new partners that year, 80% had annual budgets under \$50,000.

Our approach to grantmaking shifts power to community groups, youth activists, and leaders who have lived experience, with a commitment to those from communities which have historically been excluded or underrepresented. We fund emerging and informal entities including unregistered organizations, volunteer-led groups, and individual initiatives, and we don't require partner organizations to have a fiscal sponsor, registration status, or financial audits.

On occasion, we also fund more established, larger, or national organizations who are uniquely positioned to drive change on a particular set of issues, and whose experience and knowledge may add value to an emerging network of community-based partners.

What we fund and support

We develop trust-based partnerships with community-based organizations as they learn, grow, and overcome challenges. Our team members come from and live in the same regions as our partners, forming deep and enduring connections and bringing important insights on local context.



Financial resourcing:

- **Core, flexible funding:** We trust our partners to channel resources where they are needed most to advance their core internal needs or community priorities.
- **Long-term partnerships:** Social change takes time. We aspire to partner with organizations for at least three years and ideally up to seven.
- **Solidarity in emergencies:** We stand with our partners during moments of crisis. Emergency funding and advisory support help them remain resilient during natural disasters, conflicts, and security threats.
- **Opportunity funding:** We provide additional grant opportunities for our partners to strengthen their teams, invest in organizational wellbeing, collaborate regionally, and amplify their advocacy.
- **Special recognition:** We honor current and alumni partners through annual awards that celebrate outstanding achievements, courage, and perseverance.

Non-financial resourcing:

- **Capacity mobilization:** Alongside our partners, we co-design opportunities to strengthen the skills and resources they need to thrive, and we accompany them on their journeys.
- **Network weaving:** We connect our partners within and across countries and issues to strengthen learning, solidarity, and advocacy.
- **Collaborative learning:** We foster spaces where partners can identify and evaluate the issues and outcomes that matter most to them.
- **Safeguarding:** We work closely with our partners to address safeguarding challenges and foster cultures of safety and wellbeing that are meaningful to their specific approaches and contexts.

How we find new partners



The way we identify new partners depends on the initiative. Common sources include:

- **Referrals** from existing partners, regional or youth networks, funders, and local governments.
- **Open calls** on social media, WhatsApp groups, and via word of mouth.
- **Landscape analysis** through desktop and in-country research.
- **Through our website**, where any community-based organization working for the rights of children and young people may submit a profile for consideration.
- **Through relationship-building**, as we recognize that some of the most powerful community-based groups will be missed in our initial searches but emerge later as we deepen our work in a particular context. Whenever possible, we invite these groups to apply for funding.

How we fund



Our multifaceted approach to investing in social change enables us to support those leaders who are closest to the issues, adapt to the realities of different contexts, and respond to emerging issues and opportunities.

Our grantmaking strategies and decision-making processes weave different types of community and youth engagement through our networks for change and through our participatory grantmaking approaches. We also take opportunities to shape the sector more strategically, mobilizing funders through collaborative funds and catalyzing partnerships to drive learning and advocacy.

We have four primary funding modalities which, at times, intersect in their approaches and practices.

Networks for change: We develop regional strategies with input from our partner and youth leaders, before investing time and creativity to identify organizations that are driving change on these issues. We ‘do the homework’ to understand these organizations’ missions and approaches, eliminating paperwork that distracts from their work in communities. We take time to get to know the organizations and their leaders, thinking intentionally about the unique perspectives each partner brings. We consider how they include underrepresented communities, and how they lead with strategies that address root causes, overcome barriers, and center children and young people in their work. We seek partners who are eager to learn together, collaborate, and amplify each other’s impacts as a network of grantee partners.

Participatory grantmaking: We aim to shift decision-making power to young people and community members impacted by our grantmaking. Some ways we practice participatory grantmaking include 1) youth panels that design their own funds, 2) advisory committees that prioritize potential new partners, 3) existing partners that accompany us to visit prospective new partners, and 4) a network of partners that decides how to use a pot of funding to collaborate or take action. We recruit and support participants who have lived experience and who work closely with their communities without requiring them to have previous grantmaking experience.

Example: For the initiative Addressing the Root Causes of Exploitation in South Asia, we sought to identify community-based organizations in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal that have a shared commitment to fostering community-led change and moving beyond a service delivery model. We leveraged references from former grantee partners, reached out to regional networks, and launched an open call inviting expressions of interest. We then assessed potential partners’ willingness to deepen a genuinely community-led approach, focusing on their perceptions of community ownership, their current practices for child and youth participation, and their efforts to engage local communities to lead on program design. From a shortlist of 35, we spoke with 17 potential partner organizations and ultimately selected six that use intersectional and holistic activities focused on the wellbeing of children and youth, working alongside communities as equals.

Example: Since 2021, the Spark Fund has placed key funding decisions in the hands of young people. Youth panelists design the application process and determine the grantmaking criteria for awarding funds to youth-led and youth-focused organizations. Through a collaborative process, they decide how they want to make decisions and select our new grantee partners. The first Spark Fund round was led by four regional youth panels representing 15 countries in the Americas, Europe and Eurasia, South Asia, and Southern Africa. These panels awarded over \$1.1 million to 56 youth-led and youth-focused organizations in 13 countries.

Collaborative funds: We mobilize resources from multiple funding partners to move resources inclusively and efficiently to the grassroots. Our team animates the collective initiative with its expertise in participatory grantmaking, capacity mobilization, emergency response, and communications strategy. At the same time, we serve as a fiscal host that holds and distributes grant funds and we manage the financial and administrative responsibilities.

Partnerships catalyst: We activate emerging organizations, support research and advocacy, and develop new models to generate knowledge and connections that foster change in the sector.

Example: The RECARGA initiative strives to support the recovery, renewal, and improvement of learning environments in the Americas for children who have faced persistent barriers to educational success that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative supports a network of 15 civil society organizations in Guatemala and Honduras thanks to a collaboration between GFC and the Tinker Foundation, The Summit Foundation, International Community Foundation, Luis von Ahn Foundation, Focus Central America, Vibrant Village Foundation, The Ward Foundation, and the Trone family.

Example of sector strengthening partnership: GFC incubated and hosts the Funder Safeguarding Collaborative, a unique network where philanthropic funders can share, learn, and access support from experts and peers to implement practices that make their organization, and the organizations they fund, safer.

Example of knowledge partnership: GFC supports the affiliate entity and India-based Foundation for Rebuilding Childhood to invest in and support courageous, nascent organizations with bold ideas to meet children's needs and engage them as leaders of the future.



*check out
our new
website!*