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Global Impact Study

Final Report

August 2025

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Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

This Global Impact Study (GIS) was conducted by Ecorys researchers and the Global Fund for Children's (GFC) grant partners who were trained as co-researchers. There was also extensive collaboration with GFC, especially during the co-design phase of the study from January to March 2024.

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In total, we were a team of 38 people carrying out this GIS!

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Boxes

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CA	Contribution Analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CYPC	Children, Young People, Communities
C&YP	Children and Young People
E&E	Europe & Eurasia
FSC	Funder Safeguarding Collaborative
FF	Flexible Funding
GFC	Global Fund for Children
GIS	Global Impact Study
GPS	Grantee Perception Survey
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
L&E	Learning & Evaluation
LtP	Learning Through Play (training approach)
MSC	Most Significant Change
NFS	Non-Financial Support
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PPAR	Peer Participatory Action Research
RQ	Research Question
SALT	Support, Appreciate, Listen-Learn, Transfer (training approach)
SoC	Stories of Change
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TBP	Trust-Based Philanthropy
TBR	Trust-Based Relationship
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToC	Theory of Change
YP	Young People

01

Introduction

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1.1 Overview and objectives of the Global Impact Study

In December 2023, the Global Fund for Children (GFC) and Ecorys (research consultancy) started working on this Global Impact Study (GIS)[1].

The GIS covers two inter-linked objectives:

» to investigate the medium-to-long-term effects that GFC's trust-based model of flexible funding and non-financial support has on local community organisations (i.e. GFC Partners); and

» to explore the (indirect) impact of the funding model on children, young people, and the communities they are a part of.

The focus of the study is GFC's funding model and all that it entails – focussing on primary grants as those that encompass the full package of GFC's support, including non-financial support.[2] We also explore how children, young people and communities benefit from any effects experienced by GFC's partners. This reflects the fact that impact for children, young people, and their communities is at the heart of GFC's aspirations, whilst acknowledging that these impacts occur (often) indirectly, through the support GFC provides to partners.

1 See the full Terms of Reference (ToR) in Annex B.

2 Although GFC's wider influencing work across the philanthropic sector is an important factor in understanding the context in which grants are given/delivered, it does not form the emphasis of the GIS.

1.2 GIS questions

The main questions guiding the GIS are:

1. How do partners (especially small, nascent, informal organisations) perceive and experience GFC's trust-based relationship (TBR)?[12]
2. What difference does flexible funding (FF) make for partners (especially small, nascent, informal organisations) in their organisational development and programming (i.e. delivery of work)?
3. What role does non-financial support (NFS) play in partners' (especially small, nascent, informal organisations) development on an organisational, programmatic, and personal level?
4. In what ways does the overall package of support provided by GFC (TBR, FF, and NFS) combine to support partners to develop, better support children, young people and communities, and become more sustainable?
5. What changes are experienced by children, young people and communities after engaging with partners funded by GFC?

In some regions 'community' refers to a geographical setting (such as neighbourhoods or villages bound by similar norms) whereas in other regions, 'community' refers to service-users and those in close relationship proximity to them (e.g. young people attending a special school and their peers, friends, teachers, parents, etc).

Table 9 in Annex C provides a full overview of the research areas, research questions and sub-questions, along with an indication of the research tools providing evidence.

3 Amendment from "trust-based approach". The "trust-based approach" includes both flexible funding (RQ2) and non-financial support (RQ3). RQ1 focussed on the relationship aspect of the trust-based approach.

1.3 Outline of the Final Report

The Final Report is structured as follows:

» **Chapter 2** presents the methodology;

» **Chapter 3** provides an overview of GFC's model of funding;

» **Chapter 4** discusses the findings of the GIS, against Research Questions (RQs) 1-5;

» **Chapter 5** presents a selection of illustrative examples of GFC's contributions to impacts (for partners through to communities); and

» **Chapter 6** summarises conclusions and recommendations.

Additionally, a series of annexes provide additional detail and analysis:

» **Annex A** presents the documents reviewed

» **Annex B** presents the Terms of Reference (ToR)

» **Annex C** presents the RQs in full, along with sub-questions and sources of information

» **Annex D** describes the Theory of Change (ToC) guiding the GIS

» **Annex E** provides detail on study limitations

» **Annex F** presents Upholding ethical considerations in practice

» **Annex G** presents an overview of the Regional Portfolios of current/ former GFC grants (since 2017)

» **Annex H** provides a breakdown of the type of grants delivered by GFC

» **Annex I** presents a chronology of GFC's evolution

» **Annex J** presents a glossary of terms

02

Methodology and approach

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2.1 Overall approach

The GIS used a theory-based methodology, involving two complementary approaches – Most Significant Change (MSC) and Contribution Analysis (CA). For the deep-dive data collection, we used a Peer Participatory Action Research (PPAR) approach, in which GFC partners co-designed and carried out research with their peers.

Participatory research was at the heart of the GIS. Through this we aimed to reduce the extractive nature of the research by embedding skill and knowledge sharing and facilitating connections between partners, alongside enabling better quality research by ensuring those with experiential knowledge contributed to the GIS design, data collection, and analysis. There are inherent power imbalances in funding relationships, including that between GFC and partners, and between researchers and those being researched; taking a peer participatory approach contributed to mitigating some of these, within the bounds of the research aims and budget.

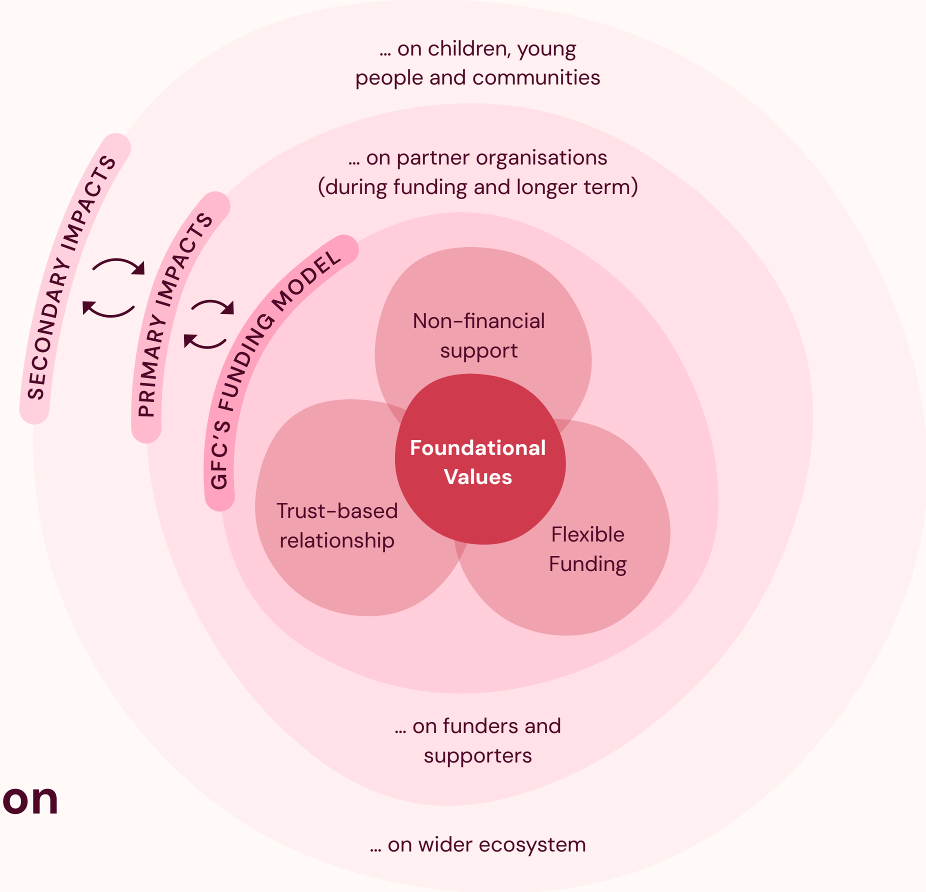
The study, developed collaboratively with GFC, had three main phases: inception and co-design, data collection, and data analysis and reporting.

2.1.1 Inception and co-design phase

To start with, the research team carried out a review of key strategic GFC documents and programme data, undertook a set of exploratory interviews with GFC staff and board members, and completed a stakeholder mapping exercise. These informed the development of a series of creative workshops with around 60 GFC stakeholders (staff, board, Youth Leadership Council (YLC), and Partner Advisory Group (PAG) members). Through these, we collaboratively developed a ToC model to be tested through the GIS alongside refining the research questions and approach.

Figure 1 shows our top-level ToC, illustrating our understanding of GFCs funding model – incorporating the TBR, FF, and NFS - and depicting how, through delivering this model, GFC creates change with/for grant partners, and the children, young people and communities where those grant partners deliver work. A more detailed articulation of the refined ToC guiding the GIS can be found in Annex D, with section 3 below providing further context around how GFC delivers 'by design'.

Figure 1: Visual representation of GFC's funding model



2.1.2 Data collection phase

Data was collected for the GIS through i) **key informant interviews (KIIs)** with GFC partners and alumni partners, and GFC staff, amongst others; and ii) **country deep dives**. These complemented each other, providing opportunities for different perspectives to be explored, as well as both breadth and depth of data to be captured.

» Virtual **KIIs and desk research** were conducted by the Ecorys team and provided a global level overview of GFCs model and approach. In total we carried out 53 interviews across stakeholder groups (see Figure 2 below). The interviews used a semi-structured topic guide, and were carried out in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Turkish, and Portuguese. This element was the more formal, or 'traditional', part of the data collection and allowed us to collect a breadth of perspectives across stakeholder groups and regions.

» The core of the GIS was through the **PPAR country deep dives**, in Guatemala, India, Kenya, and UK[4]. These were carried out by co-researchers – current and alumni GFC partners – who worked with Ecorys researchers to carry out in-depth research with their peers. In total, 24 partners were researched through the deep dives[5]. Co-researchers carried out interviews, and creative reflection activities with multiple staff members at each organisation and the young people and community members the organisation works with. This allowed in-depth understanding of GFCs contribution, and the contribution of the partners to changes in their community, to be built.

The research tools used in the deep dives included stories of change interviews, and creative reflection activities. The former were semi-structured guides designed to gather data against the research questions and stories of change whilst the latter were more informal, exploratory, child-friendly, and arts-based approach (photos, drawings, videos, written reflections, mind maps, and movement surveys).

4 The deep dive countries were selected following a three-stage purposive sampling approach, guided by information included in the partner organisation database provided by GFC (dated February 2024) and the requirements of our methodology.

5 Noting that a full set of data, as designed, was captured with 22/24 organisations, and partial data collected with the remaining two (discussed further in the section on limitations below).

Figure 2: Breakdown of total data collected during the GIS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

21
Current grant partner organisations
(one interview with each organisation)

4
Alumni Partner organisations
(one interview with each organisation)

21
GFC staff members
(one interview with each staff member)

1
GFC Ambassador

2
Donor organisations (GFC funders)
(one interview with each organisation)

2
YLC members
(one interview with each member)

2
PAG members
(one interview with each member)

53
interviews conducted in total

COUNTRY DEEP DIVES

6 Grant partner organisations researched in each of the following countries

United Kingdom
- **40** interviews
- **19** creative reflection exercises

Kenya
- **54** interviews
- **44** creative reflection exercises

India
- **43** interviews
- **15** creative reflection exercises

Guatemala
- **53** interviews
- **56** creative reflection exercises

Interviews included staff members from organisations, as well as children, young people, and communities

190 interviews + **134** creative reflection exercises conducted in total

OVERALL A TOTAL OF

377
data pieces collected/reviewed
(interview transcripts and creative submissions)

243
interviews conducted

134
creative reflection exercises

49
grant partners were researched

Developing the participatory deep dives

- The Ecorys team worked with GFC regional leads to identify and onboard 3-4 grant partner organisations from each country as co-researchers[6]. We had a team of between 6-9 co-researchers per country[7] (2-3 people per organisation). In each country, 6 'contributing partners' (the partners who were research*ed*) took part, with co-researcher teams deciding to split the work among each other in different ways (i.e. some co-researchers interviewed 1 contributing partner, whilst others interviewed 2).
- We carried out a 4- or 5-day training and co-design workshop in each deep dive country, with the co-researcher teams. Ecorys developed initial drafts of the research tools (Stories of Change interview guides and creative reflection activity guides) based on the ToC and research questions co-developed in the inception phase. During these workshops, co-researchers improved and adapted these tools based on their experience as GFC partners, and for use in their countries. We received very positive feedback from co-researchers on the research and evaluation skills they learned during this week, and on the networking and learning opportunities that took place between co-researchers.
- Co- researchers then carried out research with their agreed contributing partners. For each contributing partner, they engaged, through both interviews and creative activities, 1-3 staff members and 3-6 young people or community members. During this time, the Ecorys team had regular check-ins with the co-researchers, providing tools, offering guidance to support on the process, and receiving feedback on research topics. This helped to identify emerging themes and check on evidence gaps.

Selection of researched partners

For the KIIs, we selected partners according to a light-touch stratified sampling to select partner organisations across the regions GFC operates in (excluding the countries selected for the deep dives), ensuring an even spread of different organisational sizes (nascent, small, medium, large, and extra-large), different leadership types (women-led, youth-led), length of engagement with GFC, and amounts of funding received from GFC.

In terms of the selection process for partners to be research*ed* as part of the deep dives, this was determined together with co-researchers during the training workshops. Ecorys provided a list of all the GFC partner organisations in the country, and co-researchers made selections based on those they were most interested in researching and learning from, and those that were geographically most practical to travel to (since the research involved travelling to the sites where organisations work).

6 This was done by asking GFC's regional/country managers to send out an information sheet out to all partner organisations in the country. Those that were interested were asked to fill in a short questionnaire. We then invited all those that were interested to the training, allocating 4 organisations as our PPAR co-researchers on this project, and the remaining as our 'reserve' researchers. This selection process was made together with GFC's regional/country managers, who suggested partners who would most benefit in skill-building from this process and be able to accommodate the research requirements.

7 In total, we had 7 researchers in the UK; 6 researchers in India; 9 researchers in Guatemala (as partner organisations wanted to include more staff members to support with data collection, sharing the workload); and 9 researchers in Kenya.

Based on these co-researcher preferences, partner organisations were contacted by Ecorys and asked if they wanted to participate in the Global Impact Study. As deep dive countries had an average of 13 GFC partner organisations - with the exception of Guatemala (14 GFC partners in India, 13 partners in Kenya[8], 12 partners in the UK, 21 partners in Guatemala), after considering that 3-4 of those partner organisations were to be co-researchers and 6 to be research*ed*, most partners in the country ended up being involved in the GIS.

The number of partners in the country (having more than 10) was indeed part of the selection criteria of the countries for the deep dives. It was fortunate that almost all of the partners that co-researchers selected were interested and available to participate in the Study, and there was a fairly balanced spread of organisational sizes, leadership types, lengths of engagement with and amounts of funding received from GFC. Please see section 2.2. below for a detailed breakdown of the selected research*ed partners*.

Box 1: Training approach for co-researchers

- Getting to know each other sessions (some of which took place prior to arrival of the Ecorys team member in country)
- A GIS briefing and workshop on PPAR principles and best practices
- Safeguarding and Ethics processes and principles (including engaging with children/young people/communities)
- An introduction and overview of the MSC and SoC approaches and reflection on ways to use these in practice (adaptations)
  - Examples and practice of collecting SoC (interviews) with grantee partners
  - Examples and practice of collecting SoC (interviews) with children, young people, and communities
- Development/refinement of domains of change (broad areas where change might be expected to occur) with co-researcher input ensuring context-specific issues/considerations of relevance to be surfaced (whilst aligning to the overarching ToC/pathways of impact.
- Development of working plans on how/when/where and with who **SoC will be collected** (to ensure context appropriate approaches, whilst allowing coherence/rigour across the GIS).
- An introduction and overview of creative reflection activities (focusing on how to facilitate reflection processes, including self-assessment, to share insights)
  - Examples and practice undertaking reflective activities with grantee partners
  - Examples and practice undertaking reflective activities with children, young people, and communities
- Discussion and agreement on methods to identify, record, select, and analyse SoC.
  - Adapting templates for data capture.

8 Please note that in Kenya, there were only 5 current partners and 8 former partners, but as there was an active relationship with the former partners, they were included in the selection list.

2.1.3 Analysis phase

The analysis was guided by two main frameworks:

» **Contribution Analysis** (CA) was used to assess the contribution of GFC to partners, and then their contribution to communities, across the pathways of change identified in the ToC. CA also helped us critically review assumptions and links along the pathways of change identified in the ToC to assess whether/under what circumstances change was observed[9]. Please see Section 4.5 "RQ5 Impacts on children, young people, communities", including Table 8 on *Assessing contribution from GFC to communities*, as well as Chapter 5 "Illustrating the contribution of GFC" for how Contribution Analysis was conducted.

» **Most Significant Change** (MSC) provided a way for the GIS to capture a nuanced picture of impact through gathering Stories of Change (SoC) with partners. MSC does not require specific research skills/software, lending itself to participatory approaches.

Analysis was carried out using NVivo, and by developing contribution stories for deep dive partners, as well as using analysis matrices to pull together findings across country and global levels.

For the NVivo analysis, we developed a code list using the ToC and refined this based on co-researcher updates, which was used to analyse country and global level data. This synthesis of data across sources enabled us to assess GFC's funding model across contexts and draw out disaggregated findings. A series of triangulation and validation processes took place during the analysis phase, including SoC workshops with co-researchers in each of the countries (discussed further below), core-team workshops to discuss evidence across contexts (including from global KIIs) and against research questions, and a validation workshop with GFC stakeholders and co-researcher partners.

Aside from the inputs mentioned above, the co-researcher teams' main contribution to analysis was through a virtual analysis workshop (1 per country). These were interactive sessions that created space for partners to reflect on and discuss their findings, together as a team. These workshops guided the development of the SoCs, contribution links from GFC to partners and to communities, and identified commonalties and variance between partner SoCs.

9 The wider process of gathering evidence, assembling evidence, reviewing and identifying gaps informed the whole process - including having the sense making workshops with country co-researchers and the validation workshop, informed the process of reviewing assumptions and links along the pathways of change, and assessing whether/under what circumstances change was observed.

2.2 Overview of the grant partners researched for the GIS

In total, the GIS captured insights from 49 grant partner organisations from 27 countries: 21 current partners and 4 alumni/former partners in the KIIs and 17 current and 7 alumni/former in the deep dives.

This section outlines the attributes of these partners by region, organisational size, leadership type (women-led, youth-led), length of engagement with GFC, and the amount of funding received from GFC. In the findings sections below, we explore the connections between these attributes and the effects of the funding model. For instance, we might expect that a small organisation, that received 50% of its starting annual budget in primary grants and was funded for five years would have quite a different experience and impact compared to a large organisation, that received under 10% of its starting annual budget and was funded for two years. The breakdown of attributes of the partners presented here informs disaggregated findings by attributes presented in the findings against RQs in Chapter 4 – see pink box below!

Pink boxes that appear like this throughout Chapter 4 identify any pertinent trends and patterns according to the attributes of partners. Where attributes are not commented on or specified, it means no pertinent trend was identified across the data (e.g. if partner size is not commented on, it means the finding applies to partners of different sizes, with no significant difference).

Region

The partners reached through the GIS were evenly spread across regions, including through the deep dives and the KIIs. They were from a range of countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Ivory Coast, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Uganda, Zambia, and Kenya, reflecting the diversity of countries where GFC funds partners.

Table 1: Regional location of researched partners

Region	Americas	Asia	Europe & Eurasia	Sub-Saharan Africa
KIIs	6	7	6	6
Deep dives	6	6	6	6
Totals	**12**	**13**	**12**	**12**

Organisation size

Almost 40% of partners researched were classified as medium sized ($20-100k) at the point when they were first funded by GFC, and a quarter were large ($100-500k).

Nascent and small partners (up to $20k) made up almost one quarter (21%) of those researched, while 10% of those researched were extra-large (over $500k).

Table 2: Organisation size of researched partners

Size when first funded	Nascent (up to $5k)	Small ($5k-$20k)	Medium ($20k-$100k)	Large ($100k-$500k)	Extra-large (over $500k)	Size unknown
Guatemala			4	1		1
Kenya			2	3		1
India			3	3		
UK		1	1	3	1	
KII partners	2	7	8	2	2	3
Totals	**2**	**8**	**18**	**12**	**3**	**5**
Proportion of partners	**4%**	**17%**	**38%**	**25%**	**6%**	**10%**

Leadership type

The below table outlines how many women-led and/or youth-led partners were included in the research. Just over half (53%) of partners reached for the GIS were women-led organisations, and a quarter were youth-led.

Table 3: Leadership types of researched partners

Type of leadership	Women-led	Unknown if women-led	Youth-led	Unknown if youth-led
Guatemala	3	1	1	1
Kenya	4		1	3
India	4			
UK	1		2	
KII partners	14	3	8	2
Totals	**26**		**12**	
Proportion of partners	**53%**		**25%**	

Length of engagement (primary grants) with GFC

Just over 40% of partners who were reached for the GIS received short-term funding (defined as up to two years), just over a third received medium-term funding (defined as 3-5 years), and one-quarter received long-term funding (defined as six years or more). In terms of the deep dive countries, the Guatemala sample had a greater proportion of long-term funded partners, and no medium-funded partners. The UK sample had a greater proportion of short-term funded partners, and no long-term funded partners. The Kenya and India samples included short, medium and long-term funded partners.

Table 4: Spread of researched partner's length of engagement with GFC (through primary grants)

Length of engagement	Short (Up to 2 years)	Medium (3-5 years)	Long (6+ years)
Guatemala	2		4
Kenya	2	2	2
India	2	3	1
UK	5	1	
KII partners	9	11	5
Totals	**20**	**17**	**12**
Proportion of partners	**41%**	**35%**	**25%**

Average amount of funding

In terms of partners in the deep dive countries, the average total amount of funding was higher for Guatemala partners ($140k), and similar for the UK and Indian partners ($90k and $87k respectively), and slightly lower for Kenyan partners ($81k). However, the UK partners on average received much higher annual primary grant amounts ($25k), with India, Guatemala and Kenya receiving on average $17k, $14k, and $13k primary annual grants.

Table 5: Spread of average amount of funding for researched partners (to the nearest $1,000)

Amount of funding	Average total funding ($ USD)	Average per primary grant ($ USD)
Guatemala	140,000	14,000
Kenya	81,000	15,000
India	87,000	17,000
UK	90,000	25,000
KII partners	70,000	13,000

Amount of total funding received as a proportion of starting budget

Overall, one-third of sampled partners received 10% or less of their starting budget in annual primary grants from GFC and one-third received between 11-25%. Just over one in 10 received between 26-50% of their starting budget in annual primary grants from GFC, and one quarter received over 50%.

As with the other attributes discussed here, this could influence the relative impact of the funds: for instance, an organisation, that gets 10% of its annual budget may experience different effects of working with GFC, compared to one that receives over 50% of its annual budget from GFC.

Table 6: Amount of annual primary grant funding as a proportion of starting budget (partners without starting budget data omitted)

Primary grant as a proportion of size when first funded	Small proportion (10% or less)	Medium proportion (11%-25%)	Large proportion (26-50%)	Extra-large proportion (Over 50%)
Guatemala	1	2	1	
Kenya	3	1		1
India	2	3	1	
UK	2	2		1
KII partners	4	4	3	7
Totals	**12**	**12**	**5**	**9**
Proportion of partners	**32%**	**32%**	**13%**	**24%**

2.3 Ethical considerations and GIS limitations

An overview of key data limitations that are most relevant to the interpretation of the findings are presented here, with a full discussion of limitations and mitigations in the GIS presented in Annex E. Similarly, details of our ethical considerations are presented in Annex F, with some key points presented below.

Limitations

Generalisation

As with any sample-based approach, the deep dive analysis is based on data collection in a sub-set of countries and partners. Our methodology sought to mitigate this to some extent – capturing a breadth of insights from a range of partners through the KIIs and bringing this together with deep dive data. Nevertheless, the findings are illustrative of GFC activity, using a transparent set of selection criteria, but should not be considered representative of the full range of potential outcomes/experiences across the portfolio of grants funded. As discussed in the findings section, any read into numbers or percentages should also be appropriately cautioned.

Attribution

A theory-based approach was selected to provide an appraisal of causal contribution, reflecting the complexity of the effects of GFC grant funding and support. However, this type of research design does not include statistical controls and does not permit the quantification of impacts (causal attribution). Instead, it aligns with the notion of 'provocative generalisability' (Fine, 2018), which emphasises the power of qualitative inquiry to surface patterns, insights, and theoretical contributions that resonate beyond the immediate study context, while recognizing the situated and contingent nature of knowledge production.

Positive bias in perspectives captured

Due to inherent imbalances in power in funding relationships, and, here, particularly for those that still have a relationship with GFC, partners taking part in the GIS may have been inclined to focus on the positives of their experience with GFC when sharing insights. Issues related to the importance of asking partners explicitly for honest and critical feedback and probing beyond vague positive statements were discussed in training and co-design workshops with co-researchers (for deep dive data collection) and amongst the core team (for KII data collection). We provided partners with space for sharing any challenges or negative experiences of the funding model during discussions, and also providing opportunities for critical reflection through non-interview-based activities was, in part, to allow space for honesty. At the same time, we didn't want to push for negative accounts where these were not 'genuine'. In terms of who was involved in the GIS, we anticipated that those with a 'closer' (and potentially, therefore, more positive) relationship with GFC would be the partners to agree to taking part in the GIS as co-researchers – and this meant they were not part of the data collection for SoC so that we could gather stories from a wider mix of partners, selected purposively to capture diversity.

Further, we had very few refusals to take part in the study from those that were selected amongst deep dive and KII partners following our sampling approach – meaning we were reaching partners based on selection criteria to capture diversity of factors and not because they were recommended to us or reached because others were (for any reason) unwilling to take part/or unresponsive.

Lack of intersectional analysis

While this report is focused on partner perceptions and experiences of GFC, it doesn't provide a nuanced understanding of how differently positioned partners, particularly those working on or with lived-experience of being systems-impacted, perceive GFC. This should be considered and investigated in future studies.

Data gaps

For two of the contributing partners, it was not possible to conduct all planned interviews/creative exercises with children, young people, or community members[10]. For these partners, we have less certainty about the impacts on communities due to inability to triangulate between staff and community members. This has been accounted for in the interpretation of findings.

Bias in sampling of community members

Young people and community members who took part in the deep dive research were largely selected by the contributing partners (i.e., those being researched), meaning that those with a strong relationship with the organisation, or positive things to say were more likely selected. This doesn't discredit those voices that were included but should be taken into account in the interpretation of evidence – particularly when claiming wider community benefits.

Risks and benefits of partner-led data collection

This was both a key strength and potential risk of the GIS. Having co-researchers from within the country who work in similar fields to those they are researching, and have experienced being 'a GFC partner', facilitated more in-depth discussions and better interpretation of meaning, and a greater ability to engage with the communities that partners worked with. From an ethical point of view, whilst there will still have been power imbalances and cultural differences between researchers and (some of) the researched partners/communities, these were in most cases less than would have been in a non-PPAR research approach.

In terms of the limitations or draw backs of this approach; there will have been greater variation in data collection and data quality between co-researchers. For most co-researchers, this was their first extensive piece of research, and it was being carried out alongside their normal work – which, in some instances, brought capacity limitations. Additionally, as is the case with any research team, co-researchers had different strengths and weaknesses which added variation into the data. To mitigate this, Ecorys team members worked closely with co-researchers to support where needed throughout the research, and particularly to give feedback on and ensure correct interpretation of research notes for analysis. Any differences in quality or gaps have been taken into account in interpretation, as far as possible.

10 Due to various reasons. In one case, the timing period coincided with unexpected circumstances for the partner organisation, that made it difficult to engage with community members. In another case, the partner organisation was very busy and it was not possible to arrange research activities with community members.

A question raised during one of the validation workshops was whether partners who are most enthusiastic about collaborating with GFC and therefore possibly with the most positive and strongest impact stories would have been selected as co-researchers and, therefore, not included in the evidence/data collection. As noted above, we acknowledge that partners closer to GFC were more likely to take part in the GIS as co-researchers and that this meant their stories were not collected/ do not form part of the evidence. This means we may have 'missed' some strong contribution stories. The rationale for not including co-researchers' own impact stories about GFC and keeping them as strictly research partners and data collectors was the following: firstly, we were mindful of positive bias and sought a diversity of stories (assuming that those who wanted to collaborate on this study with GFC as co-researchers would have particularly positive perceptions of GFC)– to enable us to build a nuanced picture of how GFC's model works for different organisations (including organisations 'less close' to GFC or with a different experience of the model). Secondly, for the overall success of the PPAR model, we felt that having engaged co-researchers who would be able to fulfil the demands of the research (taking account also of their availability and capacity) was to the overall benefit of the GIS. Lastly, whilst co-researcher's stories were not part of the evidence formally for this study, insights – which are based on own experience – have informed interpretation of/weighing of the evidence.

Ethical considerations

A key point of reflection during the GIS in our ethics processes was on the higher potential in PPAR for the lines between researchers and people contributing to the research to be blurred. This topic was embedded in the co-researcher training and co-design workshop, with consideration of how to maintain 'distance', whilst building rapport and facilitating open discussion. In practical terms, we ensured the highest degree possible of respondent confidentiality, anonymity, as well as data protection at each stage of the research, from data collection through to analysis and reporting. Informed consent (and assent/consent) was gathered ahead of any data collection activities, by either the Ecorys research team or co-researchers.

In terms of 'formal' ethical procedures, the research was conducted within a robust ethical framework and in accordance with Ecorys' Safeguarding and Data Protection policies, as well as current data protection legislation. In addition, we conducted a two-stage independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) review, which involved the full research protocol design, including research tools. We also obtained ethical and research approval in Kenya, where this was a requirement. A reporting process for co-researchers to raise any safeguarding concerns was put in place and adapted for each deep dive country. Further details on our ethical frameworks can be found in Annex F.

03

Overview of GFC's approach and funding model

This section presents an overview of GFCs model of support from the perspective of outlining what GFC sets out to do and how it delivers support to partners 'as designed'. It draws on documentation, as well as staff insights captured during KIIs. The section is intended to provide context for understanding the findings against each of the RQs – which focus on how this model is perceived/experienced 'in practice' by partners.

Above: © Global Fund for Children

3.1 Evolution and approach

Founded in 1994, GFC has been delivering grants to community-based organisations since 1997. GFC, at its heart, has a belief and commitment to reaching small, innovative organisations that engage with their communities to make positive social changes.

In more recent years, and notably since 2017, GFC has iterated its model of support (see Annex I for a detailed Chronology of GFC's evolution). In a gradual and incremental way, there has been a refreshing of GFC's organisational priorities, as well as its way of working. Alongside, issues of focus – **prioritising education, gender equity, youth empowerment, and freedom from violence and exploitation**[11] – and ways of engaging with grant partners have been refined. Since 2017, there has been a move towards hiring local staff based in the regions where grant partners are located. GFC also began implementing a 'cohort approach', providing funding to a collection (cohort) of grant partners who are delivering thematically similar interventions across a region/ or regions. GFC's policy changed to expand access for unregistered grassroots organisations (including those without a fiscal sponsor) to become partners.

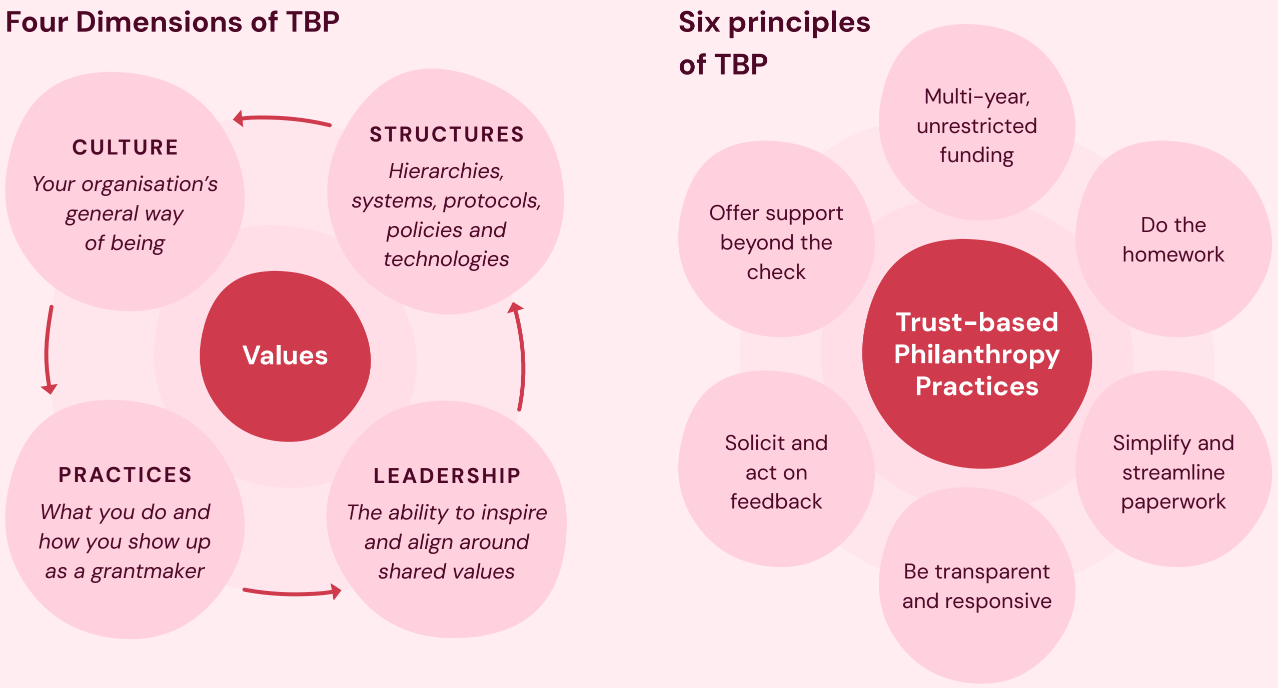
There have been ongoing reflections and discussions about principles, values, and ways of working. For example, in 2020, GFC joined a network of funders, the Trust-based Philanthropy Project, to serve as 'activators' to promote principles of trust-based philanthropy as well as to share lessons learned (See Figure 3 below). There has also been a shift towards participatory grant-making (involving grant partners, community members, and youth in decision-making around grants), such as through the SPARK Fund where youth panelists design the application process and determine the grant-making criteria to award funds.

In recent years, GFC has adopted a shared leadership model among directors, first introduced at the regional team level (instead of one regional director, there were two that shared leadership). Observing the benefits of this approach, in 2024, this model was extended to the executive level of the organisation: GFC appointed two individuals[12] to act as Co-Chief Executive Officers (Co-CEO) sharing functions and decision-making. It was stated in an interview with a GFC staff member that, after more than six months with the new structure, staff are seeing tangible difference, notably in terms of faster decision-making. During staff interviews, it was discussed that the Co-CEO role is hoped to bring diversity into the team, potentially opening up the CEO role to people who may not have the 'full complement of skills' that may traditionally be associated with the CEO role, but someone who "could bring richness and perspective in a lot of different ways".

11 Please note that there has been a slight change in the focus areas between the research period and the report release. For reference, the revised areas are education, gender justice, youth power, safety and wellbeing, and climate resilience.

12 Individuals appointed were, at-the time, in the roles of President and CEO, and Global Managing Director.

Figure 3: Trust-based philanthropy dimensions and principles



Source: https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/overview

Source: Adapted from: https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/practices

Significantly, there has been real effort to listen to and learn from partners, with major feedback gathering initiatives, such as the first Grantee Perception Survey (GPS) and the first Constituent Voice Survey (CVS), developed and launched in 2018 and 2019, respectively. These efforts were continued with a second GPS in 2021 and an annual CVS since then. GFC has also made efforts to ensure that partner and young people's voices inform strategic-level decisions. A Youth Leadership Council was established in 2018, providing mechanisms to bring diverse youth perspectives to influence different aspects of GFC's work. In 2022, GFC formed a Partner Advisory Group (a global group of long-time partners) who, in addition to building a sense of community across regions, advise GFC on policies, practices, and areas of work, especially those that relate to partner engagement.

During the pandemic, a group of leaders of GFC partners were brought together to be supported as representatives of their organisations. This group developed to be a small circle of leaders who were brought together with one of GFC's CEOs to share experiences and challenges related to organisational leadership. This is called the CEO Circle.

These changes in GFC's way of working have both been driven by a change in internal culture in GFC. Staff interviews discussed there has been an effort to foster a more trusting internal culture, where open discussion is encouraged and there is an acceptance that mistakes can be made (and learnt from). There is also an understanding that GFC have recently gone through a period of growth. One staff member noted how, following a period of significant growth, GFC should enter a period of reflection and adjustment to accommodate the growing structure.

3.2 How GFC seeks to create change

In 2021, GFC initiated the development of its five-year vision for the 2022–2026 period.

This vision emphasizes positioning '*children, youth, and their communities as drivers of systemic change*[13]'. It aligns GFC's efforts with five strategic priorities, underpinned by three core principles: Shifting Power, Wellbeing, and Interconnection. The vision is further inspired by two guiding 'stars' of Community-Driven Systems Change and Children and Youth as Leaders and Changemakers.

The development of the strategic priorities has been significantly shaped by the activities carried out since 2017. This includes the refinement of the organisation's ToC between 2018 – 2019, as well as further iterations made during 2021 and 2022. Both versions of GFC's own ToC outline that GFC aims to build **trust-based relationships**, **provide flexible funding**, and **support organisations** to build connections with other organisations, strengthening organisational practices, and (in different formulations) becoming more responsive to challenges (through learning and programming decisions)[14].

Figure 4: GFC's five strategic priorities

Connect: Weaving Change through Dynamic Networks

Sustain: A Thriving GFC

Nurture: A Joyful and Creative Global Team

Influence: Shifting the Funding Ecosystem

Learn: Sharing Collaborative Insight

Source: Adapted from GFC's Five-Year Vision 2022-2026

13 GFC's Five-Year Vision. Accessible at: https://globalfundforchildren.org/about-us/our-five-year-vision/

14 As noted in the methodology section, a full review of GFC's model, including their ToC, as well as consultation during the co-design stage informed development of a refined ToC guiding the GIS – presented in Annex D.

3.3 GFC's engagement in practice

3.3.1 Types of grants and coverage

Since its inception, GFC provides small amounts of money to innovative, community-based organisations[15]. These community-based organisations are locally-led and work on a range of issues that impact their communities. GFC supports a range of organisational sizes: they support nascent organisations (with no current income), small organisations (with minimal income), as well as larger organisations with around $100,000 or more in income. Between 2017 and 2024 (the period that this Global Impact Study focuses on), a total of 1,008 primary grants were awarded, ranging in individual size from $4,000 to $43,700 per grant. Often, grant partners receive more than one grant. Data provided by GFC indicates that during 2017-2024 there were 238 partners receiving grants across a total of 58 countries, covering five regions[16]. A table showing the total number of partners by region is presented in Annex G.

GFC describes themselves an intermediary funder[17]. Through their different scouting processes (organisations submitting Expressions of Interest forms through GFC's website[18]; referrals or recommendations from current partners; research by GFC's regional and local staff), GFC identifies and selects partners to whom they will provide funding and support. The scouting includes visiting prospective grant partners and the places they work in person, which enables GFC to identify hard-to-reach groups that are working towards community-driven systems change.

This process helps GFC to understand from the onset the context in which the partners operate and ensure they are funding organisations that are truly in need of their support. The general scouting approach can be described as: "*partners do not find GFC, GFC finds them*" (Staff KII). Some regions do have open calls, but this is for participatory funding rounds, where decisions of whom to fund are not made by GFC staff.

GFC delivers grants globally. There are a number of different types of grants that GFC provide to their selected partners. These grants include primary grants, emergency grants and other types of targeted grants (see Figure 4 in Annex G). As noted, **primary grants are the focus of the GIS**. Primary grants are annual awards provided to organisations to support their core mission or enhance capacity development. These grants typically range from $5,000 to $30,000 per year and may be awarded for up to six years (with one organisation funded for substantially longer than this). Organisations are required to submit a final report sharing financial information around how they used the grant and reflecting on learnings (see section 3.3.2 for more information about the reporting requirements). They focus on the 'package' of GFC's trust-based model (including non-financial support alongside flexible funding).

15 GFC's Founding Story: https://globalfundforchildren.org/our-founding-story/

16 Data was correct up to February 2024.

17 About Us – Global Fund For Children. Accessible at: https://globalfundforchildren.org/about/

18 For community-based organizations - https://globalfundforchildren.org/for-community-based-organizations/

In the KIIs, both staff members and partners expressed desire for funding to be on a longer-term basis. However, as one staff member said, it is hard for GFC to commit to longer-term funding rounds, even if the desire is there, due to being reliant on funding from other donors. Regarding multi-year funding, another staff member said that GFC vocalised the intention [for multi-year funding], but that not enough has been done on this point yet. This was reflected in another staff member's comments, who said that GFC's ambitions to provide longer-term funding are the right ones, however, the reality is that due to the type of funder GFC is, the organisation would have to secure more unrestricted, long-term funding for this to be possible. Staff members also explained that two-year grants are common in the funding sector, and therefore GFC could have an even stronger role in influencing funders on the importance of long-term funding.

Targeted grants, including **emergency grants**, differ regarding focus/ use, duration, grant size and engagement with GFC staff. For many targeted grants, organisations should be current, or alumni grant holders. Emergency grants are used for response to natural disasters, conflict, security threats, crises affecting organisation's work, and are used for organisations that are providing immediate need following an emergency.

As well as providing emergency grants, GFC provides capacity-development support and well-being guidance to partners as they navigate emergencies, as partners often have to pivot their work and mission to meet community needs[19].

It has been noted by GFC Staff that emergency funding is becoming a larger portion of the funds they have been providing. During the COVID-19 emergency, GFC provided more than $3 million in funds to help partners across the globe keep communities safe and help ensure the sustainability of the partners during the pandemic[20]. There is no desire in GFC to shift to become an emergency support organisation, however, there is acknowledgment that due to a cross-section of crises in the current climate, many primary partners are currently facing, or will face, more frequent emergencies. There is also acknowledgement that GFC is uniquely placed to be able to give out emergency funding due to having flexible funding, and a network of current and alumni partners. It was also raised (by a GFC Staff member) that GFC can only give out emergency funding in regions where they have a nucleus of partners and, therefore, some regions of the world may not be able to receive GFC emergency funding, due to that structure not being in place.

19 Solidarity in emergencies. Accessible at: https://globalfundforchildren.org/focus-area/solidarity-in-emergencies/

20 Ibid.

3.3.2 Reporting

Grantee partner reporting requirements are deliberately light. Organisations can produce either written or verbal reports, and with different reporting frequencies depending on the type or duration of the grant. If a particular initiative or funder requires a certain layout of reporting, GFC staff can work together with the partner to go through the report structure. One Staff member said that for one partner they organised in-person sessions with them, where, through asking specific questions, the GFC staff member was able to formulate a report into the required structure for another funder. One staff member described the relationship between partners and GFC staff around reporting as GFC having "... *this sort of altruistic sort of selfless[ness]. We are willing to take on fights on behalf of our partners because they can't. So we are like an umbrella, or a shield, and we put ourselves on the line for our partners*". Another staff member stressed how essential non-burdensome reporting is for shifting power structures between funders and partners, and that they had a conversation with a partner where a reporting mechanism was created together, which allowed the partner to submit what was relevant to them and displayed in a way which was relevant to the organisation.

For primary grants, grantee partners are typically required to submit a final report detailing financial expenditures, though no standardised format is required. GFC aims to balance its funder reporting obligations while minimising unnecessary data collection to reduce the burden on grantees. One staff member said that the approach GFC makes to learning and evaluation (L&E), and reporting, is letting the partners know that L&E should be for themselves, and not a funder. For emergency grants, reporting requirements are minimal, and often take the form of the partner simply stating what they spend the money on.

Efforts have been made to simplify reporting for grant partners, including removing output reporting. Recently, with the shift to initiative-based funding[21], there have been attempts to aggregate outcomes across initiatives. However, challenges persist in aggregating diverse outcomes and assessing impact across the entire portfolio. Additionally, it is difficult to determine the extent of GFC's impact, especially given the size of grants relative to organisation's budgets and the absence of input from children, young people, and communities in the reporting process.

21 GFC receives funding from its donors to fund initiatives (e.g. a Learning Through Play initiative) around the world, for partners working on similar themes or approaches (through the cohort approach mentioned above). This maximises the opportunity for collective action and peer learning. See here for more information: https://globalfundforchildren.org/our-initiatives/

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04

Findings of the GIS

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This chapter details the findings of the GIS, presenting the analysis from the data collected throughout the study against the RQs and the areas of GFC's model.

The focus is first on how partners experienced the **trust-based relationship** with GFC (4.1); how they experienced the **flexible funding** approach (4.2); and how they perceived GFC's **non-financial support** (4.3). In each section, we present the impacts on partners, followed by the mechanisms that contributed to these impacts (what partners said they experienced that contributed to these impacts), criticisms and limitations, GFC's uniqueness compared to other donors, and a summary of recommendations.

Following this, there is a section presenting the **impact of GFC's package of support** (i.e., the combination of the relationship, the funding, and the non-financial support) on partners (4.4). We present how different elements of the package came together to support partner's growth, sustainability, participatory approaches, and confidence and motivation. There are also case studies of partners interwoven into this section, detailing the stories of GFC's contribution to partners.

Lastly, there is a section presenting the **impacts that partner organisations create for the children, young people, and communities** they provide services for and work with (4.5). Having explored how GFC impacts partners, and how partners impact communities, we aim to trace the indirect contribution of GFC to communities against each of the identified impact areas.[22]

The findings are presented in bullet point order cascading downwards from the most referenced impacts/descriptions of those impacts, and mechanisms contributing to those impacts, to the least (with positive impacts covered in the impacts section and negative references in the criticisms/limitations sections across 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5). We have included references to 'quantify' the qualitative data in terms of the number of partners and what this equates to in terms of percentage of researched partners (in brackets) referencing any finding. **However, we would caution reading too heavily into these numbers and percentages**. Whilst frequency of reference can give an indication of the strength of the finding (i.e., it would be fair to say that 30 partners reporting the same impact is likely stronger (or, more significant) than only one partner reporting an impact), it does not necessarily align to how important/significant that finding may be in/of itself.[23] Firstly, we have not quantified the 'quality' of each mention/reference but have elaborated on it within the finding discussion. Secondly, the diversity of types of activity funded and type/duration of funding, as well as the profile of organisations and their operating context meant many, at times highly nuanced, 'significant' impacts and mechanisms were identified. Further, based on the qualitative and participatory nature of the study, it is important to note that there were variations in the data collection (based on who was asking, how it was asked, data quality/data analysis) – and just because something was not mentioned by a partner doesn't mean that it doesn't exist (see limitations section above and Annex E).

22 A selection of illustrative examples of contribution (from GFC to partners through to children, young people, and communities) are presented in Section 5 that follows.

23 Whilst we followed a MSC methodology, the evidence presented here is based on *all* of the collated SoC (rather than a sub-set of any identified specifically as 'most' significant SoC – a number of illustrative examples of different contributions to impacts from GFC to children, young people, and communities are presented in Section 5).

4.1 RQ1 – GFC's relationship with partners

All 49 GFC partners who were researched for this study mentioned that they had a relationship with GFC where they felt trusted, supported, and respected.

For a few partners, there were occasional lapses in trust due to miscommunications or misunderstandings[24]. While many spoke very highly of this dimension, for four partners (two from Europe and Eurasia (E&E), two from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)), the trusting relationship was the **best and most important aspect** of working with GFC: "*without trust, you don't have the others*".

Most partners described having a **close, caring, and friendly relationship with GFC**. One partner said "every time we speak with them; it feels like speaking to actual human beings. Often (with other funders) it's so cold". For a handful of partners (11 partners; 22% of researched partners), some of which had a shorter relationship with GFC, there was more of a **professional dynamic** – they felt they could easily ask for support, they felt heard and trusted[25], but the relationship was more formal or the depth of the relationship was not emphasised.

GFC established **strong relationships with the leaders** of partner organisations (especially in E&E and SSA, but also to some degree in the Americas). A few leads of organisations described GFC as their family, or specific people as father figures, demonstrating the closeness that they feel.

While the leaders of partner organisations were the main and frequent point of contact for GFC, **wider organisational staff members also mentioned having a good relationship with GFC** (21 partners; 43% of researched partners), although they mainly interacted with them through training and networking opportunities. Staff from several partners mentioned that they could **easily reach out to GFC**.

Many partners described **GFC as an extension of their own organisation**, as **colleagues in partnership** tackling problems together, in such a way that GFC was more than just a funder (19 partners; 39% of researched partners). One (small-sized) partner organisation expressed, "*[GFC] could see and share the vision, they could see what [our vision] would allow us to do … we worked in collaboration with GFC to strengthen the organisation*". Another partner said "*GFC are like a part of our team … they come along with us, we never felt like they are our donors*". Similarly, seven partners (across a range of sizes) described the relationship **as one between equals**.

There was a noticeable trend in **six women-led partners commenting on having a horizontal and collaborative partnership** with GFC, where GFC was described as a member of their team.

24 Please see the last bullet point under the "Criticisms" section below (end of page 27).

25 Especially with regards to being able to spend the funding according to their needs.

4.1.1 Impact of the relationship

The trusting relationship impacted organisations in the following ways:

Almost all partners mentioned that they could make their *own* decisions around their *own* priorities, determining the vision of their *own* organisation

42 partners; 86% of researched partners

Several partners explained that they gained the confidence to express themselves and stay true to their own values and visions, with one (small-sized) partner organisation mentioning that they gained the courage to reject funding streams that did not align with their organisation's morals and aspirations. A couple of organisations mentioned how the trust allowed them to focus on their essential and impactful work rather than being bogged down by bureaucracies.

17 nascent, small, and medium-sized organisations which were women-led (11 partners) and youth-led (7 partners) particularly highlighted how important it was that GFC respected and supported them to pursue their own vision. A small-sized women- and youth-led organisation expressed "*it felt like there was a silent supporter, and you can focus on the work that you want to do – you can figure out your direction*". A small women-led organisation added; "*we never had to try to explain or justify why we knew best; we just told them about the field, and proposed our solution … the most they would say is 'would you also want to add X or Y to this', and 'how can we support you*'". It should be noted that large organisations also appreciated how GFC understood them and didn't ask them to change their aspirations and aims.

Experiencing a trusting and supportive relationship helped partners gain confidence and security, which enabled them to focus on developing and growing their organisations

18 partners; 37% of researched partners

Partners received encouragement and motivation to grow at their own pace. GFC also provided advice on new techniques and approaches to carry out activities, which led to the development of activities. For one (large-sized) partner from SSA, when asked if GFC supported them to grow, the lead responded, "*That is not even a story, that is a reality … When we talk about our story, GFC is part of the story*".

This was a notable trend with **nascent, small, or medium organisations (most of which were women- or youth-led**) (overall 14 partners), and especially the case across partners in SSA (seven partners). For example, a small largely youth-led organisation said that GFC's trusting relationship was essential to provide them a space to grow through grassroots activism at their own speed. A small organisation's leader also noted: "*The dynamic in which GFC gave us the room and confidence to rethink our process has allowed us to rethink our purpose as an organisation*".

Four leaders of nascent/small organisations (two of them women-led, two of them in SSA) where GFC started supporting them when they were at an early stage, with no systems set up, emphasized how important, transformative, and fundamental their relationship with GFC had been. One leader mentioned that GFC's belief and trust (alongside GFC's NFS) in her had been fundamental in her stepping into her role as the head of the organisation. Partners mentioned that GFC's approach created a safe and encouraging environment for young leaders.

For some large and extra-large organisations, especially in E&E (three partners), even though the funding by GFC was a small amount relative to the size of their organisation, the close relationship with GFC was significantly emphasized as being unique among their other multiple funders. For one extra-large organisation, the relationship and dynamic with GFC gave them **confidence and reassurance** that they were doing the right thing.

Partners' leaders modelled the trusting dynamic with their own staff members and shifted towards more trust-based collaborative ways of working

9 partners; 18% of researched partners

For example, one partner shifted their leadership style following GFC's involvement, moving from centralised decision-making and a low-trust environment to one where staff were empowered, and their feedback was taken on board. Two staff members from different organisations emphasised that feeling trusted and supported had made them better at their job; it had enabled them to better make decisions or develop trust with children and communities. Indeed, in several cases, the trusting dynamic with GFC also influenced partners to adopt collaborative ways of working with community members and young people (seven partners). As a grant partner expressed, "when you feel like an accepted, welcomed partner, the positive impact is reflected in how we manage individual, group, and collective processes with young people".

The leaders of four small-medium women-led organisations in different parts of the world (Americas, Europe and Eurasia, Africa, Asia) commented on how GFC's trusting approach helped them empower their staff members and/or young leaders. Two of these organisations said that **GFC's trust-based approach was the foundation of all the other support they provide**.

Partners said that their close relationship with GFC positively affected their wellbeing, both on a personal and organisational level

9 partners; 18% of researched partners

One partner said that the morale in the organisation was low, but GFC's support (by offering a "sort of mediation within the organisation") was "almost therapeutic", helping mend relationships and create new bonds within staff members.

Five of these partners were based in SSA. Many of them spoke about how their relationship with their GFC contact had supported them to overcome personal and mental health challenges which had in turn improved their relationship with their staff, helping them achieve their goals as an organisation.

Several partners mentioned that as a result of the trusting approach, there was room to make mistakes, experiment, and take on challenges

5 partners; 10% of researched partners

This helped organisations learn from failure, take risks, and grow.

Three youth-led small organisations (two of which are women-led) highlighted the importance of this. One partner said that if they are in the middle of a project and realise there has been a mistake, GFC accept this as normal, and they do not have to feel worried about being reprimanded. Another said that GFC staff are forgiving if there are mistakes. One small, largely youth-led organisation expressed that when they work with GFC, they feel strongly emboldened to work on challenging and transformational topics.

GFC's PAG and YLC interviewees felt that their opinions and voices were heard and respected

One interviewee said they can see this through looking at GFC's documents, as they contain "*exactly what we discussed and our inputs, our thoughts, and our ideas*". One member said that out of all the youth advisory groups that they have been part of, GFC has been the most interested in making sure members are genuinely involved in the programming. Similarly, one partner organisation commented that it was a positive experience to be interviewed for this GIS about what GFC could do differently, and it was the first time a funder had ever asked them these types of questions.

4.1.2 What makes the trusting relationship work (mechanisms)

The following factors contributed to the above-mentioned impacts:

Caring staff that respect the expertise of partners

17 partners; 35% of researched partners

Partners felt that GFC genuinely valued and cared about them and the issues their organisations faced Partners strongly appreciated this, and it also helped boost their wellbeing and confidence. **GFC staff were key in building and maintaining trust-based relationships**. In three cases, during a challenging time for partners, GFC's personalized support, such as checking-in regularly, was crucial for supporting partners to navigate difficult periods smoothly. This was also reflected in GFC Staff members' approaches, 10 of whom spoke specifically about GFC trying to reduce power dynamics between themselves and the partners. One staff member said, "I never consider myself an expert – I do not know the context that every partner works in". This shows how GFC staff do not impose knowledge on their partners and respect their partners for having a deeper understanding of the context in which they operate.

While this was true for organisations of all sizes, the care felt by GFC was strongly emphasised by large or extra-large organisations who commented on how rare it was from a funder (four partners). They felt respected; one large organisation mentioned how they didn't need to "give the harrowing details of someone's abuse to get the funding". An extra-large organisation said, *"I can name them on one finger, you know, the times that a funder have called me and asked, 'how are things?', you know?"*.

The accessibility and responsiveness of GFC staff

17 partners; 35% of researched partners

Nine partners expressed that they could easily contact GFC staff (including via phone, email, or WhatsApp) and get a swift response or arrange 1-on-1 meetings. The expression "we could ring them whenever" was mentioned several times. As one staff member of a youth-led and women-led organisation stated: "*They are always ready to help, they respond quickly, it's truly impressive.*" One partner emphasised that through the trusting relationship, they were able to raise and address concerns in real-time, enhancing their ability to respond to emerging challenges.

In-person visits by GFC staff

15 partners; 31% of researched partners

Partners expressed that GFC's visits showed that they were interested in understanding the organisation and were invested in the relationship. These visits helped build relationships with ground-level staff, understand their capabilities, offer feedback, and provide motivation. Visits **helped GFC identify and provide tailored non-financial support**, thereby helping develop partners' work. The visits from **GFC's CEO** were also impactful (three partners); it made partners feel heard and appreciated. One partner asked for more in-person visits and one mentioned that when the visits diminished during the pandemic, the relationship weakened, confirming that in-person visits are important for partners.

GFC's patience and flexibility

12 partners; 24% of researched partners

Organisations appreciated that they didn't have to bend to fit GFC's requirements, and that GFC was patient and flexible with them. One partner especially remarked on this as they worked towards achieving legal status, feeling that GFC trusted and adapted around organisations' needs, rather than only selecting more advanced or registered organisations. Another partner acknowledged GFC's understanding of the challenges in acquiring degree certificates in certain contexts, as they do not require university-level qualifications for team members in grant partners.

Open, safe, and non-judgmental communication

10 partners; 20% of researched partners

Many partners felt they were able to communicate openly about challenges, issues, and mistakes, which supported partners' learning and development. Partners particularly highlighted feeling supported by GFC whenever they faced challenges. As one partner explained, "*GFC doesn't shut down responses; they look for alternative solutions to the problems we present*".

Three women-led organisations in Asia felt that GFC would **listen to their needs** and **guide them** appropriately.

Trusting partners with unrestricted funding and light monitoring approaches

9 partners; 18% of researched partners

This links to RQ2 below on flexible funding, and shows how components of GFC's model are linked, but it was recurrently mentioned as one of the ways that partners felt GFC's trust in them. One partner mentioned; "*We feel there is strong trust in us and in the decisions we make; the flexibility in resource management is a clear indicator of this trust.*"

Values alignment between GFC and partners

5 partners; 10% of researched partners

Organisations felt that GFC's values aligned with their own moral standings and goals. One partner summarized; "GFC aligns with [my organisation's] mentality – it is open, critical, and has an openness with a primary and genuine interest in children". Three partners in the Americas appreciated values alignment in terms of respect for the dignity of the communities they serve, recognising that the structural issues they face cannot be solved with funding alone and that fieldwork is more important than office work.

4.1.3 Critiques or limitations

Some partners occasionally experienced miscommunication or misunderstandings

6 partners; three in SSA and three in the Americas; 12% of researched partners

For example, two partners didn't understand the decision-making process of selection into advisory group membership or an event that was planned in their country (they were upset and confused when they found out that other partners were consulted "behind their backs"); two organisations mentioned concerns about funding abruptly coming to an end.

4.1.4 GFC's uniqueness and a summary of recommendations

GFC's uniqueness compared to other funders

When speaking about GFC's uniqueness compared to other funders, the main differences that emerged were:

» GFC's trust, especially in relation to providing flexible funding.

» GFC's human and caring approach – *"usually funders come with clipboards and tick, tick, tick, whereas GFC is actually curious"*.

» The *amount* of caring support offered compared to other donors.

» GFC's in-person approach – *"they are one of the few funders that come in and see what is going on"*.

» Being easily contactable and approachable.

» Treating organisations with respect.

» The possibility to meet GFC's CEO.

Recommendations for the trust-based relationship

What GFC should **keep doing** with partners:

» Open, safe, and non-judgmental communication (where partners can comfortably share challenges or mistakes)

» Being easily accessible and quickly responsive.

» Being genuinely caring, offering personal support, and respecting partners' expertise.

» Being patient, flexible, and understanding.

» Finding partners that align with their values.

» Providing flexible funding and light monitoring approaches.

» In-person visits (should be sustained, but there is room to improve/increase the number of these further).

What GFC should **improve on**:

» Clear transparent communication with partners, especially regarding how GFC makes decisions, selections, and plans

4.2 RQ2 – GFC's funding approach

Almost all partners directly mentioned how GFC's flexible funding and light monitoring approach has positively impacted their organisations and their work

46 partners; 94% of researched partners

Flexible funding meant unrestricted money given to partners to spend as they saw fit. The total amounts received by partners ranged from $19,000-$203,000, with an average amount of $85,000 per partner (calculated across the 49 partners reached through the GIS).

Although specific breakdowns of what the funding was spent on was not a focus of this study, the stories by partners indicate that GFC's flexible funding mainly went towards **staff costs** (hiring staff and paying for staff time on projects) and **programme delivery costs** (expenses on materials, equipment, rent, and running activities). Many partners (10 partners; 20% of researched partners) also spent their funding on **trainings or investments** (e.g., consultants, new technologies) to improve their organisation's capacity and efficiency. Some partners (especially small organisations in Europe) spent the money on **travel for staff** to attend events or gain new experiences. Lastly, a few partners (in Europe) mentioned investing money into their organisation's **reserves**.

4.2.1 Impact of flexible funding for partners

Allowing partners to respond to community needs ("*be needs-based*")

30 partners; 61% of researched partners

Many organisations spoke about how the unrestricted nature of the funds allowed them to be flexible and listen and respond to the needs of communities (which many other funders do not allow them to do). An extra-large partner organisation commented that even though the funding was a small amount, it enabled them to "*do proper youth-work*", offering activities based on the interests of the young people they served. Several partners (a range of sizes, a range of leaderships, a range of countries) mentioned how the flexibility allowed young people or **communities to direct where money goes**, carrying out community- or youth-led development work that other donors would not fund. This also contributed to developing strong relationships and trust with communities. Several partners mentioned that flexible funding combined with the community-led approaches they learned from GFC's non-financial support worked together to allow them to be needs-based.

Ability to invest and improve internal processes of the organisation

25 partners; 51% of researched partners

Many partners highlighted that FF supported the strengthening of internal structures and systems within their organisations, by training staff, purchasing equipment, hiring consultants or specialised staff (e.g., psychologists), or reflecting on organisational strategies. This improved services for communities, especially vulnerable children (e.g., children with disabilities) who are typically unsupported by mainstream approaches. Three partners mentioned **spending on costly digital equipment that improved efficiency** and was seen as a sustainable investment to allow them to operate beyond the length of the grant. For example, one partner mentioned that monitoring technology helps them see the impact of their work, enables more precise interventions, and supports scaling up efforts. For many organisations of various sizes (nascent to large), the funding helped them **pause and think** about how they can improve their work.

For example, GFC's flexible funding gave one organisation the "breathing space" for the senior leadership team to provide supervision to the frontline team and improve the professionalisation of the organisation. The breathing space allowed partners to make sense of complexity, conduct self-assessments, develop workplace protections, update workplans, strategies for equity and diversity, and innovate. For several partners, **this reflection and strategizing was linked to being able to access further funding**, as they were able to refine their work and make necessary investments to be 'funding-ready'. For several partners, improved internal processes and, therefore, improved service delivery helped them gain visibility and recognition in their communities and beyond.

Crucial in sustaining the organisation's activities, particularly by covering core organisational costs

16 partners; 33% of researched partners

Many partners emphasised that GFC's funding allowed their organisations to continue delivering essential activities since they were able to fund costs (staff salaries, training, psychological support, administrative or legal fees) typically excluded by other donors. While the funding amounts were not generally large, **they came at critical times for many partners, enabling them to survive**. A medium-sized women-led partner organisation stated, "[GFC's funding] is a beacon for us right now because we barely have other people or organisations believing in and supporting our work". For another youth-led, medium-sized partner organisation, while they would have survived without GFC's funding, sustaining their activities would have been significantly more challenging, with inevitable delays.

This applied to organisations of various sizes but eight **unregistered and small organisations** (especially those that are **women-led and youth-led**) particularly emphasised the importance of GFC's funding for their sustainability. Six unregistered partners (four women-led; three youth-led) said that receiving GFC funding was crucial for their organisation, as they were unregistered at the time and, therefore, could not easily access any funding. Due to GFC's support, two partners were able to become registered. As an example, before GFC, a partner was run by volunteers; through GFC's funding (and trust), they funded an event where local government attended and, thereby, decided that they could gain registration, which "*changed everything*" for them. Similarly, for two small, youth-led (registered) organisations, the funding was either "instrumental" in sustaining their projects or essential for their recognition and, therefore, sustainability of their organisation.

Allowing partners to expand their services and increase capacity

16 partners; 33% of researched partners

For several partners, the funding from GFC was used to "capitalise" on their existing work, **hire new staff, and open their doors to more people, increasing the number, frequency, and length of sessions**. For some, particularly larger organisations, GFCs funding sits alongside other funds that may fund the core programmes and is used to supplement, complement, or enhance that funding. For example, it may be used to employ specialist teachers to run creative or extra-curricular activities or to work with differently abled children, to deliver core services in a new area, to provide nutritional or health support alongside education, or to increase subsidies on school fees.

In one example, a community centre was funded by another funder, but GFC's funding was used to make the space safe and accessible. A few organisations used GFCs funding to fund their whole programme in a new locality – including community outreach.

This was especially the case for **medium, -large, and extra-large organisations**, as smaller organisations tended to use the funding to deliver core services. One large partner organisation said, "even when compared to other really big funders, organisations still massively appreciate what Global Fund [for Children] do".

Ability to adapt to challenges, crises, or changing circumstances

14 partners; 29% of researched partners

Particularly with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic, seven partners mentioned the impact of being able to **quicky mobilise** essential supplies, food, health kits, and respond to the emerging needs of communities. In another context, when a war erupted in a territory a partner was working in, flexible funding made it easy for them to change the scope of the project. Similarly, another partner, working in a warzone, was able to shift their project focus when the war came to an end: "*The grant was helpful, because without that help, we could not have gone from one step to another*". In this light, **emergency funding (also unrestricted and flexible)** was very useful alongside primary grants. For two partners in Europe, the emergency funding helped them survive as an organisation during a very difficult period. For another, it helped them rescue children from a dangerous situation. A few partners mentioned that they were deeply appreciative of GFC's quick mobilisation and disbursement of emergency funding, expressing their relief and feeling very heard.

Improved motivation, wellbeing, and confidence for staff

12 partners; 24% of researched partners

For several partners, the funding used towards the timely and **adequate compensation to staff** helped reduce turnover and increase staff motivation, confidence, and commitment to the organisations' activities. An organisation noted that staff being paid on time improved their motivation and sense of being valued. Another noted that the staff on a program to which they allocated GFC funding had been well paid, which had supported their wellbeing. Improvements in service delivery have also boosted staff motivation. For instance, a staff member noted: "*seeing empowered girls in a context where they face sexism, and exclusion fills me with satisfaction – I come home with renewed joy every time I visit the communities because I know we are making a difference*". The **light reporting requirements also contributed to a "stress-free" environment** for staff, improving their wellbeing. Some partners also mentioned that they invested in wellbeing days for staff, which also contributed to better moods and motivation of staff.

Allowing partners to carry out holistic, continuous, and long-term (uninterrupted) work with children, young people, and communities

12 partners; 24% of researched partners

For many partners who were carrying out existing work with communities, GFC's flexible funding was used to **"fill in the gaps" of when other funding ended** so that activities could continue (and therefore maintain progress, relationships, and trust with communities). In one case, where a partner was working with vulnerable young people, this continuity that GFC's flexibility provided was imperative to carrying out impactful and successful work: "*flexible funding meant we never had to refuse services to a young person*".

Similarly, when other funding from donors was restricted to certain activities or geographical zones, GFC's flexible funding allowed partners to add services (e.g., family support, special needs support, 1-on-1 meetings) that supplemented existing activities to ensure a holistic service. For example, for one grant partner, flexible funding enabled the organisation to expand its focus beyond young people to include also parents and grandparents. This shift allowed them "*to address needs in a more comprehensive and sustainable way*", better understand the resources and services available in the community, and foster relationships with local leaders.

Allowing partners to make mistakes and learn

6 partners; 12% of researched partners

GFC's funding approach allowed partners to make **mistakes, take risks, experiment, learn from hurdles**, and improve (including three medium to extra-large partner organisations), and in ways that they mentioned they cannot do with stringent bureaucratic funders. One extra-large partner organisation stated: "*you know every new ground that we break, that's what GFC, our second smallest funder, and interestingly both of our smallest funders, allow us to do; to test things that we might not ordinarily be allowed to test*". For one partner, as a result of their experimentation, they improved their innovative approach which received national and international recognition.

4.2.2 What makes these impacts happen (mechanisms)

The flexibility of funding and the unrestricted nature of the funding was the main aspect that partners said contributed to the impacts listed above

33 partners; 67% of researched partners

Most funding with partners' other funders is not flexible – "*you can't deviate from that, or you can't come up with your own. Or young people can't direct which way that goes*".

The light monitoring requirements, limited paperwork, and limited formal expense reporting was also mentioned frequently by partners

21 partners; 43% of researched partners

This approach freed up staff capacity for project work and enabled quick reactions in response to emerging needs.

Many partners specifically mentioned that the reporting requirements were easy, stress-free, and were not a burden on the organisation. Light reporting requirements also allowed organisations to focus on internal organisational development, which can be otherwise difficult to measure. As one partner expressed; "*how do you measure the improvement in professionalism at leadership level and its cascading impact on the team? That's much more complex than going, 'how many hours are you doing with young people on the streets?' GFC's model has kind of enabled us to kind of get into that process.*"

Timely disbursement of funds

21 partners; 43% of researched partners

Three partners especially emphasised the importance of the timely disbursement of funds by GFC, which enabled them to deliver their programmes and pay staff as planned, which helped strengthen relationships with staff and communities.

4.2.3 Critiques or limitations

Many partners highlighted that the funding period was too short

12 partners, across various organisational sizes, who received funding over a broad range of funding periods (2-5 years); 24% of researched partners

Many highlighted that the funding period by GFC was not long enough to support the sustainability of organisations and long-term work in communities. Some partners mentioned that if they receive long-term support, then they can focus more on their work, as otherwise half of the organisation's energy is spent in the insecurity of what will happen next year. *Our research did not probe about the ideal desired length of the funding period, so this is an area GFC could do further consultations with partners about.*

Many partners highlighted there was a lack of clarity or communication over whether their funding would continue, with confusion over how long the funding would last

9 partners; 18% of researched partners

One partner expressed; "sometimes we do not know if they are going to renew their funding". Two partners also voiced disappointment over their funding being cut earlier than agreed, which hindered their progress and caused confusion.

A few organisations shared concerns that the funding amount is too little

4 partners; 8% of researched partners

They found the amount to be limited and easily exhausted, and they felt that the funding was insufficient to achieve long-term impact or meet community expectations. More research is needed to determine what partners would prefer, and if many other partners think this way.

Partners mentioned that the funding being delivered in annual cycles did not facilitate planning and sustainability

2 partners; 4% of researched partners

More research is needed to determine what partners would prefer, and if many other partners think this way.

Partners requested to receive more feedback and suggestions from GFC in terms of how to spend the money (a youth-led small organisation) and insights on partners' performance at the end of a programme cycle

2 partners; 4% of researched partners

The partner who asked for guidance on how to spend the funding expressed that they know what they want to do but they could benefit from different ideas and suggestions. The partner who asked for feedback believes that this would help partners understand funders' perspectives better, build confidence in pitching to other funders, and gain valuable external feedback. More research is needed to determine what partners would prefer, and if many other partners think this way.

4.2.4 GFC's uniqueness and a summary of recommendations

GFC's uniqueness compared to other funders

Partners raised the following points about the uniqueness of GFC's funding approach compared to their other funders:

» The unrestricted nature and flexibility of the funding.

» Light monitoring requirements.

» Funding for unregistered organisations.

» Providing emergency funding.

» Partners being able to pay for core costs.

» Partners being able to carry out long-term uninterrupted work with young people/ community members as the flexibility allows them to fill gaps with other donors.

» Partners being able to carry out community-led and community-engagement work.

» Partners feeling like equals rather than a funding recipient.

» Partners being able to experiment and innovate.

» Partners being able to fund activities other donors don't usually fund.

Recommendations for the funding approach

What GFC should **keep doing** with partners:

» Flexible and unrestricted funding.

» Light monitoring, limited paperwork, and limited formal expense reporting.

» Timely disbursement of funds.

» Funding unregistered organisations.

» Providing emergency funding.

What GFC should **improve on**:

» Consider longer funding periods, to support partner growth and sustainability (see RQ4).

» Clear communication with partners about the conditions, length, and amount of funding.

» Research further into whether many partners prefer larger funding amounts, different funding cycles, and more involvement (guidance and feedback) from GFC in terms of spending/assessing the funding

4.3 RQ3 – GFC's non-financial support

There was a strong and widespread sense that GFC's non-financial support (NFS) services impacted partners around the world

45 partners; 92% of researched partners

However, there were **regional differences**: the strongest impacts of non-financial support were reported in SSA (56 partner stories[26]), followed by the Americas and Asia (both with 46 partner stories), with less of an impact in E&E (30 partner stories).

This may be because there is more emphasis on capacity development/NFS in some areas of GFC's work than others - often budget dependent - as there is not an equal "offer" across all funded initiatives. Partners were most impacted by networking opportunities, organisational strengthening, and access to further funding, followed by safeguarding, mindset shifts (regarding power imbalances), and staff skills, with fewer although still significant impacts on wellbeing and Learning & Evaluation (L&E). The Table below presents a breakdown:

Table 7: Numbers of stories that mention different types of benefits/impacts, by region

Type of impact	Partners reporting significant stories in Sub-Saharan Africa	Partners reporting significant stories in the Americas	Partners reporting significant stories in Asia	Partners reporting significant stories in Partners in Europe & Eurasia	Total stories
Networking opportunities	8	9	9	7	**33**
Organisational strengthening	9	9	6	4	**28**
Access to further funding	9	6	6	7	**28**
Safeguarding	8	4	7	3	**24**
Mindset shifts (power)	9	7	5	2	**23**
Staff skills	5	5	6	4	**20**
Wellbeing	4	6	3	3	**16**
L&E	5	0	4	0	**9**
Total	**56**	**46**	**46**	**30**	

26 A story does not necessarily equate to one interview transcript or creative exercise; there were multiple stories within each interview or creative exercise based on the various prompts and areas research participants talked about.

Several partners were **reassured that they weren't obliged to take part** in NFS, and that GFC was relaxed about them opting out when they didn't have time, as time to attend NFS was generally a problem for organisations (especially in E&E). Some partners commented that NFS (especially training) was delivered in a fun, engaging way, and that the relaxed atmosphere of networking events contributed to effective collaboration. Two former partners noted that the non-financial support they received did not stop when their funding stopped, which they appreciated.

4.3.1 Impact of GFC's non-financial support on partners

Knowledge-sharing and learning from networking opportunities

33 partners; 67% of researched partners – 9 Asia, 9 Americas, 8 SSA, 7 Europe & Eurasia

There was widespread evidence that partners had appreciated and benefited from networking opportunities provided by GFC. However, some partners reached through the GIS mentioned how networking opportunities could be improved; see sub-section below on *Critiques and limitations*.

Networking opportunities appear to have benefited organisations of a **range of sizes**, roughly evenly spread around the world. However, there was a much **stronger sense** that networking had a significant impact on the work of organisations in SSA, Asia, and E&E, and **less so in the Americas**[36]. For example, partners in the Americas highlighted that, while these exchanges allowed them to share knowledge and experiences, they did not always lead to direct strengthening of partner structures or services. Partners in the Americas raised the most critiques about how networking opportunities could be improved in terms of their relevance.

Through networking connections, partners established **peer networks among themselves** (e.g., WhatsApp groups) that they could call upon for general support and share opportunities (especially in SSA and Asia). This helped improve work with communities. For example, several partners explained that establishing contacts with organisations in different regions helped them reach or rescue service-users who had left, moved, or been trafficked out of the geographical zone they work in. Some organisations described the relationship with their cohort members as ones of peer mentorship, where they shared problems and solutions. In SSA, three partners had set up formal connections with other partners (one of these was to collaborate on a future bid, and two were around joint working across similar themes that, when combined, would create a holistic service for service-users).

Across the world, many partners expressed that they **learned from networking opportunities**. There were numerous examples of partners learning new techniques from each other or being inspired by each other's work, and, therefore, improving work in communities. For example, a partner in SSA spoke about how two notable programming developments they had implemented – an empowerment centre for girls, and a daycare centre to improve the accessibility of their programmes to mothers – had come from things they had seen implemented by other partners. In the Americas, a partner visited another partner's community and saw how they used literacy concepts with children, subsequently adapting this in their own work.

27 Several partners in the Americas expressed general appreciation for the opportunity to participate and share experiences with other organisations, but noted that networking exchanges were not always relevant to all grant partners. See section below on "Critiques and limitations" for more information.

In Asia, there were three partners that travelled to other partners and received peer-training from them on specific approaches (ranging from pedagogic, gender-empowering, and community-led approaches). They then mentioned implementing these and improving services for children and communities. Learning from networking was also |seen in the PAG; one member said that since being a member of PAG, they have gained useful insights from other members, which allows themselves and their organisation to grow.

Partners did not explicitly mention or refer to the **cohort approach**, but they did mention working with like-minded partners who were working on similar themes, so it is likely that this was referring to the cohort. Partners in SSA seemed to be most familiar with the concept. Those who did comment on the cohort approach mentioned that it was highly relevant, unique, and useful for peer learning, skill-building, and sharing best practices, since they are all "on the same page" so it is easy to understand one another.

Organisational strengthening

28 partners; 57% of researched partners

Overall, there was a really strong sense that organisational development was one of the main benefits of GFC's non-financial support.

This was largely the case in SSA and the Americas (nine partners across each region), with fewer examples from Asia (six partners), and **fewer still examples from E&E** (four partners). In general, **larger organisations** in E&E didn't experience significant organisational shifts/benefits from GFC's NFS. **Partners from E&E described** trainings and workshops as learning opportunities that were interesting and helpful, but specific impacts were rarely mentioned.

Almost all organisations in SSA, the Americas, and Asia mentioned how crucial GFC's support was in helping them learn about their organisations' strengths and weaknesses, which was followed by relevant **tailored support** and **training workshops** to help strengthen their systems accordingly. In SSA, partners referred to the **organisational capacity index** (OCI) that helped them do this. Three partners in Asia described how GFC's NFS was key in **increasing efficiency** and digitising their administrative processes. For example, partners previously did not have accounting software or monitoring systems, as they were done manually. GFC supported them with installing accounting software, which made the work easier as well as improving the organisation's ability to get funding from other funders. Three partners mentioned that the social media support they received made a massive difference to their organisation and was tailored to their goals. GFC's **mentoring and bespoke advice** was key. For example, one partner mentioned that when they wanted to let go of staff for their poor standard of work, GFC provided guidance on how to build the capacity of staff and give them responsibilities based on their strengths, which solved the problem. Clearer and more efficient structures also contributed to increased staff confidence and capacity to manage challenges, as well as a sense of ownership of internal matters, improving the quality of work of the organisation.

GFC delivered trainings and support on internal management (e.g., policies, workplans, ToC, project and budget management, grant management, personal growth and wellbeing, L&E), as well as service delivery (e.g., psychological care, human rights, community leadership, masculinities, gender equity, child-centred approaches, safeguarding, etc.). Partners really valued the **in-person visit** at the beginning of their relationship with GFC (and subsequent visits where they took place). They felt that this allowed GFCs support to be "context aware" and relevant to their organisation (especially in SSA and Asia).

Access to further funding, visibility, and recognition

28 partners; 57% of researched partners

There was quite widespread evidence that GFC supported partners' visibility, recognition, and access to further funding. Many organisations said that GFC provided **networking opportunities**, introducing them with other donors or networks, inviting them to speak at panels, and peer-partner connections which led to applications to further funding as a consortium (14 partners). Partners felt that they had gained a **positive reputation and credibility** by being funded by GFC, which increased their chances of accessing other funding (11 partners). Also, GFC provided **support with applications** for other sources of funding, providing guidance on how to write applications and proof-reading proposal submissions (nine partners). Partners commented that due to **improved organisation structures** as result of GFC's broader support, they were able to access other funding initiatives or conduct their own fundraising (eight partners). For example, partners were able to use flexible funding to increase their capacity to look for funding opportunities, leverage existing projects to gain further funding, and put funding into reserves, which helped show funders that they were financially sound. Several partners were grateful that GFC staff **shared information about funding opportunities** over email or via newsletters. It should be noted that five partners[28], especially those in the Americas, reported that despite being introduced to other donors, they didn't successfully secure additional funding through these exchanges.

A large number of partners (16 partners) who said that GFC helped them access further funding (through a variety of approaches elaborated below) were **women-led**. Nine **youth-led** (out of the 10 youth-led partners reached for this study) organisations mentioned this as well.

The region that reported to have accessed other funding the most was **SSA**. This was achieved mainly due to GFC's support with funding applications to other donors. However, networking opportunities, the credibility and good reputation GFC provided them, and GFC's support with organisational strengthening (putting policies and structures in place) and capacity development enabled them to access further funding (especially for those who had never had international funders before). Most partners who accessed other funding were partners who had longer term and more intensive relationships with GFC.

Partners with **short-term support from GFC** experienced access to funding opportunities due to networking opportunities, particularly by forming consortiums with other partners or speaking at events, or by using GFC's funding to invest in their own fundraising initiatives or leveraging the progress they made through GFC's financial support. Those with **longer term support** spoke more about GFC's organisational capacity-building, GFC's support with proposal writing, as well as introductions to other donors, all of which facilitated their access to further funding. Those that had longer relationships received more bespoke and involved support in this area. There were few exceptions to this, but this was a general trend.

28 These 5 partners are not included in the statistics above.

Improved safeguarding

24 partners; 49% of researched partners

There is strong evidence that GFC supported organisations on developing good, relevant, safeguarding practices – both those that have not had a safeguarding policy previously, and those that have. There was a strong theme that improvements to safeguarding impacted on organisations' work with communities, through improving their attitudes towards care, improving transparency and communication, developing trust, or carrying out awareness-raising activities on child protection.

Evidence of GFC's safeguarding support was **widespread in SSA and Asia** (17 partners), and less widespread in the Americas and Europe & Eurasia (seven partners)[38]. In many cases, this was due to organisations not needing support as they had sufficient practices in place, but some partners did not elaborate on why they didn't receive safeguarding support, so this could be an area for GFC to investigate further and systematise across all partners.

Improved safeguarding was a finding across a range of organisational sizes, but there was a trend that there were **15 women-led partners** out of the 24 partners that mentioned safeguarding improvements.

GFC has supported organisations with **existing safeguarding practices to improve their policies**, resulting in more inclusive, effective, and practical safeguarding practices. For example, in Asia, partners spoke about how their safeguarding approach was theoretical, superficial, or basic (e.g., one partner said that their policies now address not only physical harm but also emotional safety; another partner brought in external experts specialising in child protection to further strengthen the policy). In another example, an organisation in SSA (who already had a safeguarding policy) spoke about how their safeguarding improvement work began at GFC's first visit to their organisation (during the OCI), which was complemented by further GFC support and trainings. They then spent a portion of their grant running internal reviews and carried out two internal workshops to develop and embed practices. Similarly, GFC has also supported **organisations who had not considered safeguarding previously to develop and embed policies**. One large partner organisation in Asia mentioned "*without GFC, we would not have felt the need for a safeguarding policy*". Another organisation – that carries out work to support girls experiencing violence in SSA - spoke about how GFC helped them to develop their first safeguarding policy, which has now been embedded across the organisation.

There were two partners who were dissatisfied with GFC's safeguarding support. One of them expressed that they would have liked more continuous support, as apart from initial encouragement to build a safeguarding policy, they did not receive further support; and another expressed that safeguarding guidance could have been more comprehensive. These impressions were, however, not widespread.

29 Some partners' geographies are unknown, which is why the total numbers of disaggregated statistics may not always add up to the total amounts presented in first sentence explaining the number of partners for a finding.

Mindset shifts towards communities and power imbalances

23 partners; 47% of researched partners

There was strong evidence that GFC supported shifts in attitudes towards power. The mechanisms and focus of this varied across organisations.

For example, there were transformational mindset shifts in the ways organisations related to **service-users and communities**[30] (17 partners; 35% of researched partners). This was strongly experienced through specific trainings such as the SALT (Support, Appreciate, Listen-Learn, Transfer)[31] approach in India and the Learning Through Play training in Kenya. For some organisations, the improvements to their relationship took place through daily or informal practices, such as involving students and community members in activities, giving them more leadership roles, listening attentively to their needs, as well as creating safer or more comfortable environments for active participation. For others, it was through implementing formal structures that involved service-users in decision-making (e.g. Girls' Forums), or engaging with other local stakeholder networks, to inform programme direction. Organisations and communities who participated in SALT described how village members came up with the idea of conducting research to identify solutions to problems in the community, determining projects to implement based on this[32]. The trainings by GFC also changed how partners communicate with communities, asking them for suggestions on what needs to be done and what they need before preparing proposals and budgets.

One partner shared that they have "*integrated ancestral beliefs and values into the educational process*" to better communicate with communities.

For some organisations there were **shifts in leadership and management practices** in which staff were more included in decision-making, and more empowered in their roles (8 partners; 16% of researched partners). This took place through GFC's leadership support to partners (coaching and working with leaders of organisations, especially in SSA and the Americas), trainings, organisational development support, and SALT trainings (Asia). Three organisations said that understanding power dynamics made them consider the power dynamics within their own organisation and led to them taking steps to create a more equal environment. This involved setting up internal committees that were focused on staff wellbeing in the organisation and removing hierarchical staff titles. As an example, a partner shared that before GFC, they had a board of trustees which did not rotate and included both the head of the organisation as the chair, and an immediate family member. With GFC, they were able to make a more transparent board of trustees, which excluded the immediate family member, and his role changed from chair to coordinator. With GFC, they also put in place rules around how long you could sit on the board for, and now no-one can be on the board for more than 10 years.

30 As specified at the beginning of the report, communities are not the same across different regions; in some cases, partners work with geographical communities (such as neighbourhoods or villages) and sometimes they work with communities of service-users (e.g. young people attending a special school).

31 This is a step-by-step methodology that allows the community to take ownership of their challenges. It is called a Community Life Competence Process (CLCP). Facilitators accompany the community as it moves towards ownership of their challenges with an appreciative approach that is characterised by the acronym SALT (Support, Appreciate, Listen-Learn,Transfer). The community takes action and learns from its experience, which then becomes the basis for another round of action and learning. For more information, please see: https://the-constellation.org/our-approach/salt-clcp/

32 The topic of village led research came from the village after the SALT and CLCP process. Through this research, the village members explored ways to build a happier, more thriving village.

Some partners expressed a shift in their **mindset towards donors**, whereby previously they had seen donors as untouchable, or saviours (8 partners; 16% of researched partners). They were now able to see donors as people, and many considered not working with funders that don't support their goals and aspirations. One organisation in SSA had previously not wanted to engage with international donors but needed to begin doing so because they had got to a point where their user demand was more than they could sustain. Through working with GFC, they were introduced to other trust-based funders, or global fundraising platforms, which they described as a big positive mindset shift.

Compared to the other regions, very few organisations in **E&E** (two partners) mentioned experiencing shifts in how they viewed communities, staff, or donors as a result of GFC. Most of the partners in E&E were delivering youth leadership and empowerment work, so it may be that they did not request or need this type of support from GFC. Also, GFC's work on this topic was intentional and specific to SSA and Asia, which likely contributes to these results. The regional differences in what community means is also important to consider, since in some regions (e.g. SSA), 'communities' refer to villages bound by social norms, so involving the whole community is necessary to change social norms, which is not necessarily the case in E&E.

Improved staff skills and staff empowerment

20 partners; 41% of researched partners

There was strong evidence that GFCs training had **supported staff to improve their skills** (fundraising skills, facilitation skills, communication skills, social media skills, etc.). This had numerous positive impacts on their confidence, wellbeing, and quality of work internally and with communities. As one partner expressed, "*before, they [staff] were girls receiving workshops, and now they're executing and managing projects with new ideas, supporting their peers by sharing experiences and solutions to challenges, which helps them grow and improve*". Another partner expressed "*the success of staff has increased like a river, flowing positively into communities*". A partner also said that their involvement in the CEO circle built their capacity as a leader, as it allowed them to network with leaders of bigger organisations.

In SSA and Asia, skill-building came through strongly from the Learning through Play (LtP) and SALT trainings. These trainings made teachers and staff **more confident**, particularly in facilitating work with communities and being able to take on challenging issues. Several organisations gave an example of changing their approach to discipline due to the LtP trainings; they now focus on listening to the challenges and where they have come from, working on finding a solution, rather than telling them they are wrong. Two partners which received SALT training commented on how their **team collaboration and cohesion improved**. Previously staff would be focusing on their own projects, creating a more isolated working environment, but now staff support each other in different projects when there is a need. Receiving training workshops from GFC in the Americas also significantly affected staff skills; they felt that they had improved their ability to **understand community needs**. One partner expressed; "*We have noticed a significant change in our colleagues' ability to make decisions and identify the needs of families. They can now more easily recognise what each family requires at any given time*".

GFC helped staff **identify and address the root causes of problems**. For example, for one organisation, before GFC, they were focused on getting children back into school but not tackling the root reasons why the children were leaving education. By having discussions with GFC staff, the organisation understood the importance of system changes and system-building, and the organisation started focusing on retention, looking at policy and advocacy. There were many similar examples to this, including one partner mentioning how they used to report beggar children to the police, while now they guide and help them and their families. Greater understanding of community needs has also inspired staff in a large partner organisation to effectively innovate in their practices.

Several small- and medium-sized women-led partner organisations (mainly in the Americas, Asia, and SSA) described that GFC has better prepared staff to respond to community complexities, such as tackling taboo or challenging topics.

Improved wellbeing

16 partners; 33% of researched partners

Support to improve wellbeing, or improved wellbeing, was less widespread than some of the other impacts. Nonetheless for organisations that discussed well-being, it was meaningful and impactful.

There was a slightly larger impact on wellbeing for partners based in **the Americas** (six partners out of 16). It was less frequently mentioned in SSA (four partners), and especially Europe & Eurasia (3 partners) and Asia (3 partners).

The ways in which GFC improved partner organisation wellbeing was by providing specific, but varied, wellbeing support. This included suggesting and finding wellbeing coaches to support partners, funding/promoting wellness days or retreats for partners, incorporating wellness topics in GFC trainings that led to improvements in staff awareness about wellbeing, and supporting partners to improve their internal wellbeing policies. The variety of experiences across countries speaks to the tailored nature of GFC's support. It is also connected to flexible funding as some organisations spent their funding on self-care days and hiring wellbeing counsellors to support their staff. For some organisations, the impacts of these have been notable in **changing their approach internally**, **improving morale, improving staff members' understanding of wellbeing and communication amongst staff**, and **enabling them to work better with communities**. Two partners expressed that their most significant change from being a GFC partner was how they viewed the mental health of their organisation. For example, after participating in a staff wellbeing workshop, an organisation had a mindset shift, and now they allocate wellbeing funding for staff in direct contact with traumatised service-users. Another partner highlighted that they learned to prioritise wellbeing by observing how GFC embedded it into their own practices: "*we've adopted their example with self-care and relaxation workshops*."

Another strong theme on how GFC supported the improvement of wellbeing was through the improvement of **staff confidence** through improved skills, **more empowered staff** through better functioning organisations and safer workplaces, and **more relaxed and stress-free** staff due to minimal reporting requirements. Lastly, in some countries (especially SSA and the Americas) staff being **adequately funded and paid on time** supported their wellbeing.

Improved L&E

10 partners; 20% of researched partners

Support to improve L&E and improvements to L&E was much less widespread than other impacts. While there are a few examples of M&E improving partners' work internally or with communities, this seems to have been less transformational/impactful than other aspects of GFCs support. The kinds of improvements that partners spoke about included being able to incorporate community feedback more consistently and therefore having greater accountability to communities, improved skills allowing them to assess and therefore improve the quality of programmes, and improved documentation processes.

Three partners mentioned that they would appreciate GFC's help in evaluating their impact, although two did not ask GFC about this yet (and it was unclear to one that they could receive support on this topic).

Improved L&E was mainly mentioned by partners in **SSA and Asia** (5 and 4 partners respectively). None of the organisations in the Americas spoke about improvements to M&E.

4.3.2 Critiques and limitations

Not tailored or relevant enough

5 partners; 10% of researched partners

Five partners (in the Americas and E&E) felt that partner exchanges and group training workshops with other partners were not always relevant to their organisations. A partner pointed out that the event was at a time when staff from a youth-led organisation couldn't attend as it was during their school time. One partner expressed that the training content was "too generic", and another found the group workshops repetitive; "*they were trying to help, but they didn't really know what we needed*". They expressed that the workshops provided general solutions to their specific problems, which didn't solve the issue but just gave some ideas. Several suggested that the NFS could be more tailored and expertise-specific to organisations. Our research identified that for two partners, owing to earlier skills development, staff felt better prepared to broker connections and establish partnerships with organisations working in similar sectors, which is perhaps what can be applied to other partners to help them reap more benefits from the networking opportunities.

Not communicated clearly

5 partners; 10% of researched partners

Five partners (mainly in the Americas) felt they would benefit if GFC communicated more clearly about what the opportunities are and how they align to an organisation's specific needs. One partner asked for more guidance on how to fully leverage the NFS, as they were concerned about overusing the resource. Two partners noted that support around safeguarding or L&Ecould have been highly beneficial but was minimal due to unclear communication with GFC, resulting in missed opportunities.

Not consistently offered to all partners

5 partners; 10% of researched partners

Five partners felt like GFC had not provided them with networking opportunities (it should be noted that one of these is a former partner who last received GFC's primary grant in 2017). Four partners mentioned that they would want more consistent opportunities to be connected to other partners, funding opportunities, and donors.

4.3.3 GFC's uniqueness and a summary of recommendations

GFC's uniqueness compared to other funders

Several partners talked about the advantages of GFC's approach to NFS compared to other funders, expressing that other funders are less "hands-on" and just leave organisations after providing the funding (9 partners). Another four partners mentioned that what is unique is that GFC maintains a close partnership which partners do not get with other funders. Many grant partners did not elaborate in depth and compare NFS from GFC to that of other funders, potentially due to this not being a common element in other funders' models.

Recommendations for GFC's non-financial support

What GFC should **continue** doing:

- Support the creation of peer networks among partners (e.g., WhatsApp groups).
- Connect partners who work on similar topics to learn from each other (*not necessarily in the same cohort, but thinking of how partners can be inspired by each other*).
- Help partners identify strengths and weaknesses and offer tailored NFS accordingly.
- Provide in-person visits to better understand organisations.
- Include partner staff in NFS (not just leaders).
- Connect partners to other funders, support them with funding applications, invite them to speak at panels, and share information about funding opportunities.
- Offer safeguarding training and support.
- Provide trainings that support partners to shift mindsets (e.g. towards meaningfully involving communities, child-centred approaches, etc. such as SALT and LtP).
- Provide leadership and management training to leaders of organisations.
- Help partners identify and address the root causes of problems.
- Encourage partners to prioritise wellbeing, by funding/promoting wellness days or retreats, incorporating wellness topics in trainings, and improvements to internal policies to prioritise wellbeing.
- Provide L&E support.
- Provide FF so that partners can invest in relevant NFS for themselves to supplement GFC's NFS.
- Provide light monitoring approaches.
- Be relaxed about partners' attendance at NFS sessions.
- Provide a fun, engaging, and relaxed environment during NFS sessions.
- Model the type of practices (e.g. wellbeing) that GFC seeks to impart onto partners.

What GFC should **improve on**:

- Communicate clearly about all the NFS services GFC can offer.
- Run expertise-specific sessions and avoid generic sessions at group partner workshops/convenings.

4.4 RQ4 – Overall impact of GFC's support on partners

This section looks at the total package of GFC's support for partners (the relationship GFC has with partners, the way it provides them funding, the non-financial support it provides them), and summarises the impact that GFC has on partners.

As seen in the sections above, the ways that GFC supports partners is very interlinked; the trusting relationship is an integral part of providing unrestricted flexible funding, which goes hand-in-hand with the tailored, relevant, non-financial support. **It was very rare that partners would mention that one aspect of the model was better than the other**; the general impression throughout the data collected was that these **elements work together to create impacts for partners**.

We will now explore how all the elements of support combine together to create the most significant impacts identified for partners. This section will also present, for the first time in this report, case studies of partner organisations, detailing the *contribution story* of GFC to its partners. At the end of the section there is a box summarising some insights on how funding amount/duration influenced the types of impacts experienced by organisations.

*Please note that how all of this then impacted children, young people, and communities is presented in section **RQ5** below.*

4.4.1 Growth

Many partners emphasised that GFC had supported them to learn, grow in size (staff and capacity) and skills, and improve as an organisation

34 partners; 69% of researched partners

GFC helped its partners grow by providing trainings to **improve staff skills and capacities** (including leadership skills) and providing guidance on systems that can be used **to improve efficiencies and strengthen** the organisation. **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning support** also encouraged them to develop systems to gather learnings from their work, improving quality and relevance.

Through GFC's encouragement, reassurance, and flexible funding, partners were able to **take risks, make mistakes, and work on challenging topics**, which also helped them **learn and innovate**. Experiencing a trusting relationship helped organisations experience stability and security, gaining **breathing space** to reflect on their organisational growth.

Indeed, all of this was complemented by the unrestricted funding, which partners used to **invest in their organisation** (improving systems, safety, and quality, hiring staff, expanding services or premises, etc.), especially areas identified as **strengths or weaknesses in assessments** with GFC, so that they can serve more people in better ways. GFC also promoted partners' growth by **connecting them** to other partner organisations, which helped them **expand their contacts**, conduct work or operations in other geographies, and **learn** new skills. By **promoting partners** at panels, summits, and events, as well as online, through blogs or their web presence, GFC helped them **achieve visibility and credibility** (including internationally), which helped them access new funding and supporters. Also, being **affiliated to partners** helped them gain credibility, which contributed to them **accessing new funding**.

Box 2: Partner case study #1

GFC provided a nascent/small partner less than $100,000 over 4 years. The partner used the funding to cover core costs and fund events/travel. The leader of the organisation describes having a relationship with GFC founded on mutual benefit, understanding, respect, trust, with frequent visits. The trusting relationship was credited as providing space for this partner to grow through grassroots activism "*at their own speed*" and providing an encouraging environment for youth leadership. They felt comfortable taking risks, knowing that if they failed GFC would still support them. Meeting other organisations helped them broaden their geographical reach, access new resources, reflect on their work, learn new skills, and improve. GFC was credited with developing the leadership skills and confidence of the team. Staff members expressed that since working with GFC, they feel more accountable to the communities they work with, they feel more confident about providing leadership opportunities to young people and working on transformational topics. They mentioned that this also supports the sustainability of the organisation, as young people can take over the leadership and help the movement grow. The monitoring, evaluation, and safeguarding practices they learned helped them improve the quality of care they provide.

GFC helped raise the visibility of the partner through opportunities to share their stories at networking events and through promoting them on their website. The overall package of support from GFC has helped the partner achieve recognition for its innovative work. This exposure and GFC's funding has been "*instrumental*" in enabling them to grow into a recognised organisation.

Box 3: Partner case study #2

This medium-sized partner was funded by GFC for 5+ years, receiving around $150,000. The funding was used for institutional strengthening, to hire a consultant, invest in equipment, and pay staff salaries. They commented that unrestricted funding allowed them to redirect resources to where they are needed the most. The lead had a personal relationship with their GFC contact person, who helped them deal with personal issues, which in turn helped improve their relationship with the staff team and implement trusting dynamics with the team.

GFC carried out trainings with the organisation on leadership, safeguarding, and financial management. According to one member of staff, this was the first time they had come across safeguarding. All staff felt that GFC had strongly contributed to their internal systems, supporting them to improve record-keeping and accounting, establishing M&E and safeguarding policies. Teachers/trainers talked about how the training they had received transformed how they delivered their lessons and made them more confident in their teaching. The partner attended a partnership networking event and felt that it had been very relevant, as they had been exposed to new ideas and learn new approaches. The lead felt that they had improved what they offer service users due to the network that they now have in place. GFC introduced them to donors and provided references for them. The partner felt that having been supported by GFC over multiple years had elevated their reputation and visibility and made them more attractive to other funders. They also learned simple ways to tell their story and advocate for themselves. Across all staff there is a strong sense that GFCs supported them to grow as an organisation. The lead credits the institutional strengthening with them now supporting higher number of students, having more staff, attract more clients for their business, and being able to manage larger grants.

4.4.2 Sustainability

GFC supported the sustainability of partner organisations, in the short-term (helping partners continue activities that otherwise would have had to stop) and in the long-term (helping partners grow strong enough to no longer need GFC's support[33])

33 partners; 67% of researched partners

In the short-term, GFC facilitated this through the unrestricted funding that partners used towards **core costs or their reserves**, which helped them **sustain and keep their work afloat** during difficult times (such as when other funding dried up or emergency situations arose). Being able to allocate the flexible funding to staff salaries also helped **retain staff and reduce turnover**, which contributed to the sustainability of activities.

By providing support to **strengthen organisations** (their safeguarding, their financial management, etc.) and supporting them to have multi-disciplinary, skilled and confident teams, partners also began to be more "donor-ready" **or attractive to new donors**. GFC's relationship with partners gave them confidence in trust-based models, which helped them **choose new funders that aligned with their values**.

33 Not all partners are alumni yet so this is difficult to fully assess.

Similarly, partners spent the flexible funding to develop **innovative approaches or marketing products** (e.g., videos) that were then leveraged to attract new supporters or members. GFC also **connected partners to other donors**, and supported their applications to other funders, helping them access further funding and expand their base of support. By being connected to other partners, they were able to **form consortia or joint projects**, which helped them obtain new funding. Also, through GFC's fundraising training and support to develop sustainability models, **partners conducted their own fundraising initiatives** and diversified their income streams (e.g., raising money from the community, from other international donors, etc.). Through multi-year funding, partners were able to develop **long-term strategies** and operate on a long-term, larger-scale basis. Lastly, sometimes through the SALT and community-led trainings that GFC provided, partners helped communities establish **self-sustaining structures**, which in some cases meant that they relied less on partners, and partners, therefore, relied less on GFC[34].

Box 4: Partner case study #3

A former large partner organisation was funded by GFC for four years, receiving approximately $50,000. They felt very trusted and believed in by GFC, partially because they felt they didn't have the structures in place to be able to receive international donor funding. They felt that GFC were alongside them in moments of success and failure - "*GFC is a donor that became a friend and is still a friend*".

GFC carried out an assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and subsequent support/training on these identified areas. They developed accounting and auditing structures and developed their first safeguarding and child protection policies. GFC "*awakened*" the idea of having policies. Some staff spoke about having increased their confidence, leadership, and communication skills. They participated in partner networking and learning exchanges with relevant organisations - the idea for their flagship programme came through a learning exchange/networking event that they attended.

Without GFC, the lead thinks they would have survived, they just would have been operating only at the level they were before. GFC has allowed them to expand and sustain themselves. GFC connected this partner to many networks, funders, and awards, which has sustained them since GFC's departure. Prior to working with GFC, the organisation ran a local fundraising model – which allowed them to be more independent but was also limiting their capacity. Through guidance and advice from GFC, and being introduced to relevant donors, this organisation shifted their approach and began working with international donors. Being supported by GFC, and developing the required organisational structures, made them more attractive to new donors. For example, the lead says they were only funded by a new donor because of their previous connection to GFC. They also won extra funding through an award GFC recommended them to apply for.

34 There was also evidence of community members expressing that they would be "helpless" if the partners stopped their community-led work in the area, which indicates that more research is needed into understanding how long/what types of conditions create self-sustaining community-led work.

Box 5: Partner case study #4

A large partner organisation received approximately $100,000 for a medium amount of time (3-5 years). GFC's flexible funding was essential to ensure uninterrupted work with their service users, since the funding was used to plug in the gaps between when other sources of funding would end and start (other funding was geographically restrictive and age-restrictive). This partner needs to offer long-term support in order to build a consistent and trusting relationship with their service users. Flexible funding meant they never had to refuse services to people. The networking opportunities and trusting relationship with GFC provided learning, motivation, and moral support, especially as the CEO expressed that it's difficult to stay motivated during the challenging work they do.

GFC supported this partner's sustainability during a difficult period. At one point when the partner wasn't awarded the funding they were expecting from other donors, they called GFC and were quickly provided with emergency support. As a result of this, the staff team were largely untouched and could continue their work. They are in a strong position now. A staff member added, "*there's no doubt, if [GFC] hadn't done what [they] did, we'd have probably been in a different position … a very different position*". Another staff member added that without the GFC funding "*we may have closed our doors for a period of time*". GFC's flexible funding was also used for the organisation's reserves. So, when funding dried up, they could use these reserves to maintain staff and the organisation. Reserves were also useful to show their legitimacy to other funders.

4.4.3 Confidence and motivation

Through the range of ways GFC intervened with partner organisations, leaders, staff, and volunteers gained confidence and motivation to improve their work and continue delivering their work

28 partners; 57% of researched partners

Through **skills trainings and workshops**, staff improved their competences. By **emotionally supporting partners** to work on challenging topics or areas, and by **strengthening partners' safeguarding** approaches and policies, staff felt more confident about responding to difficult issues and protecting community safety and wellbeing. Similarly, by helping partner organisations prioritise and put in place **policies for staff wellbeing**, they helped create more positive and motivating working environments.

This was complemented by the **timely disbursements and unrestricted funding** that partners received, which they spent on staff salaries, so that staff were paid on time and compensated for the work they do. Partners were able to **spend their flexible funding** on wellbeing days, retreats, or travel opportunities, which staff appreciated.

Also, due to **light reporting requirements**, partners felt reduced stress compared to how they feel with other more bureaucratic funders. Additionally, by **meeting other partner** organisations and organisation leaders, partners experienced solidarity, support, and inspiration, motivating them to keep doing the difficult work they were doing.

When GFC provided partners with **a platform** at summits and events, they were able to share their stories and their work, which helped them gain confidence, visibility, and recognition, providing motivation. Lastly, **experiencing a trusting relationship** and being able to stay true to their own vision and make their own decisions contributed to partners' confidence and wellbeing.

Box 6: Partner case study #7

GFC provided funding to this medium-sized partner organisation for 1-2 years. GFC is one of their many donors, but despite this, their support has enabled the organisation to continue its educational assistance to young people. Without GFC's funding, sustaining these activities would have posed a significant challenge. In addition to maintaining its existing programmes, they have also expanded their educational assistance. GFC's support has also been essential in fostering the partner's organisational development. Through workshops, GFC has also helped enhance their institutional protection policies and behavioural standards, which have, in turn, improved staff well-being. As one staff member noted, "*They [GFC] challenged us a little on some issues … for example, how a wellbeing space becomes an institutional policy, and how we seek resources for the team's well-being*." By offering technical training for educators and allowing them to allocate funds toward staff salaries, GFC has helped strengthen staff capacity to work with children, continue professional development, and stay motivated to remain in the organisation.

The partner also highlights the increased confidence it has gained as an organisation owing to GFC. On one hand, GFC's trust in their work has reduced operational pressure of needing to meet externally imposed operational targets. As they explained, "*We feel comfortable implementing, requesting, and managing funds because GFC's support adapts to the needs of the institution*." Additionally, they note that GFC's support has driven improvements in their activities: "*When you feel like an accepted, welcomed partner, the positive impact is reflected in how we manage individual, group, and collective processes with young people*." Being invited to meetings with other organisations has also helped them feel recognised as an institution that can not only learn from organisations with diverse approaches but also contribute to the conversations, which in turn has motivated staff further: "*There's a lot of inspiration to attend [the exchanges], a lot of enthusiasm, and a sense of initiative among the collaborators*".

Box 7: Partner case study #8

This medium-sized organisation received funding for 5+ years, receiving under $100,000. Staff expressed that GFC helped the organisation grow from being a small entity, with the support feeling like *"oxygen"*. In the first two years they just continued their work, but halfway through the funding period, they "*changed a lot*", as staff capacity, confidence, empowerment, skills, and learning increased. They can now manage four to five projects simultaneously, write reports, and have achieved various successes.

GFC offered this partner numerous trainings on many different topics. The GFC contact person was "*always helpful and available by phone call*" to support needs of the whole team. Staff cooperation, team-bonding, and knowledge-sharing has improved through GFC- "*None of us had this feeling that I will not tell other project girls that I am working on this project. I will teach others what I can do*".

As a result of GFC's trainings, staff and community members now develop research-based questions based on issues they observe in the community, and seek to find solutions to them. Safeguarding awareness, child protection, and knowledge of consent has increased – "*Before I knew nothing about child protection, now I understand everything*". Staff feel more responsibility towards the community. Staff have also improved in their ability to provide counselling to children. The M&E training helped them develop learning habits. GFC provided staff with the motivation, courage, and confidence to work in the [challenging area/zone that the partner works in[43]] (previously some staff were afraid). Through GFC, the team learned how to be mentally strong, how to handle and respond to the worst situations.

4.4.4 Egalitarian and participatory approaches

Many partners described experiencing transformational shifts in their approaches as a result of partnering with GFC

19 partners; 39% of researched partners

By providing partners' leaders with **training and management support**, GFC helped them create more participatory environments for staff. Also, the **trust that partners received** from GFC inspired them to replicate this approach with their teams and in communities.

Through the **SALT and LtP trainings**, partners learned about democratic and interactive approaches to engaging with communities, including providing leadership opportunities to young people and community members.[35]

35 Anonymised to protect partner's identity.

This was complemented **by connections with other partner organisations**, through which partners learned of new ways to deliver community engaging or community-led work. Through the financial security partners had as a result of the funding, they were able to implement **activities or programmes on time, continuously, and consistently**, thereby gaining the trust of communities.

Similarly, by having flexible funding, partners were able to carry out needs-based and community-led work, letting **communities guide where money should be spent**. Also, by receiving L&E **training from GFC**, partners collected feedback from service users, which was then used to improve programmes and ensure they reflected community needs.

Box 8: Partner case study #9

GFC provided a medium-sized partner with approximately $150,000 over 5 years. Funding was used for staff salaries, capacity-building, and to implement a community-led approach. The long-term duration of the funding was appreciated. GFC staff were described as caring and empathetic, and easily available to provide support. GFC listened and trusted the partner's approach rather than telling them what they should be doing. GFC also offered staff team-building exercises and signposting to areas where they can learn further about a topic or issue. GFC provided guidance and training on the SALT approach, and comprehensive safeguarding trainings.

The partner feels that GFC has helped them grow "*very much and tremendously*". The partner shifted towards a listening community-led approach, although they describe that it was a long and challenging process for staff to change their approaches.

The lead and staff express that without GFC, this change would not have happened. Staff learned communication skills, listening, community approaches, co-learning and dream-building skills. Also, now the management team meaningfully involves staff (and the community), asking their suggestions on what needs to be done and what they need when preparing proposals and budgets. Previously, the partner was deciding on what to do, but after GFC's intervention the community (especially children) are involved in planning, with the partner providing support. Previously, a staff member used to report beggars to the police; now they guide and help them, trying to understand and solve the root causes. Five staff members have gained facilitation skills and train other project staff and community members on community-led approaches. The SALT approach also supported the partner's sustainability because the community now has more tools on how to self-sustain itself.

Box 9: Observations on GFC's size of funding and length of funding relationship[43] with GFC

Across all regions of the deep dive researched partners there were consistent findings that:

- **Short-term funding (1-2 years)** of **around 100k** for **small-medium** organisations[44] was **highly impactful** for organisation's **growth and confidence**, especially when also complemented by TBR and NFS. There were not many impacts on sustainability or participatory approaches.
- **Long-term funding (5+ years)** of an amount that is larger than the organisation's starting budget when partnering with GFC (amounts ranging from **75k-300k**) to organisations of any size, together with NFS[45] (especially SALT/LtP) and TBR, **highly impacted** their organisational strengthening and therefore **growth, confidence, and long-term sustainability**, as well as their ability to create **community-led, needs-based, participatory** change in communities.
- **Short-term funding (1-2)** of small amounts **(50k)** for **small-medium** organisations was **still impactful**, especially (where relevant) complemented by TBR and NFS, but GFC's impact was **not that significant** in the organisation's general growth (it often supported a key branch or activity), and not significant for sustainability or participatory approaches[46]. Unless GFC was the key donor of a branch or activity, it was difficult to trace GFC's clear and strong impact.
- **Short-term funding (1-2 years)** of around **50-100k** for large and extra-large organisations was **still impactful**, because of the flexibility of the funding, timely disbursements of emergency funding when the organisation was struggling (e.g. unanticipated cuts to their other funding) and complemented with TBR and NFS. Long-term funding of small amounts didn't change this.

36 Length of primary grant funding relationship (in years)

37 Please note that medium organisations had starting budgets up to maximum 100k.

38 Note that an organisation with this profile that did not receive NFS did not achieve long-term sustainability!

39 Unless they allocated most of the funding for this purpose.

4.5 RQ5 – Impacts on children, young people, and communities

This section looks at the most frequently cited impacts that GFC's partner organisations created for the children, young people, and communities they work with and deliver services to.

The findings presented here are, therefore, *indirectly* linked back to GFC; GFC contributes to these outcomes as a result of the growth, sustainability, confidence and motivation, participatory approaches and more that it provides its partners (as described in RQ4 above), who then carry out activities, projects, and initiatives with community members. It should be noted that the data informing this section largely derives from the Country deep dives in Kenya, India, Guatemala, and the UK, as it was through the in-country research that we were able to conduct interviews and creative exercises with children, young people, and community members. The KIIs did complement these findings, but the KIIs only gathered impacts on communities from the perspective of staff at grant partner organisations, so they have only been referenced to the extent that they back-up or add nuance to the findings from the **24 partner communities researched**.

In total, 123 interviews were conducted with community members - 42 with adults and 71 with children and young people. This was complemented by 86 creative exercises completed and submitted (photos, videos, drawings, mind maps, written reflections, journal entries, and "movement surveys"[40]) (29 from adults; 57 from children and young people)[41].

4.5.1 Tracing GFC's contribution to community-level impacts

In this section, and for each impact area presented below, there is a **strength of contribution assessment**, listing the number of partners where GFC clearly and strongly contributes to the impacts at community-level, and the number of partners where GFC's contribution to communities is not so clear. The number of cases of contribution that were assessed is based on the partner stories from deep dive data.

40 This is where research participants are asked to move to an area in the room indicating the degrees to which they agree or disagree with a statement, followed by prompts to explain themselves

41 There were 25 interviews with community members conducted in the UK (5 with adults, 20 with children & young people), completed by 10 creative activities (3 with adults, 7 with children & young people). In India, there were 27 interviews with community members (15 adult, 12 children & young people), and 7 creative activities (3 adult; 4 children & young people). In Guatemala, 35 interviews were conducted (12 adults; 23 children & young people) and 38 creative activities (12 adults, 26 children & young people). In Kenya, 36 interviews were conducted with community members (20 adult, 16 children & young people) and 31 creative activities (11 adults, 20 children & young people).

This is followed by a set of illustrative examples of ways GFC has contributed to partners and then, indirectly, to communities in Section 5 (drawing together the whole 'story of change' and tying together/profiling in detail evidence presented against RQs 4 and 5). The research team made the contribution assessment for each impact area based on the following:

Table 8: Assessing contribution from GFC to communities[42]

Assessment	Explanation and examples
Clear and strong contribution from GFC to communities	Contributions were assessed as clear and strong when: » Children, young people and communities participated in activities, trainings, workshops, travel, etc., that were primarily funded using GFC's grants. » CYPC impacts were connected to structures, methods, and leadership bodies that were established primarily through GFC's support and guidance to the organisation. » GFC was the primary or sole funder of the organisation or a branch of the organisation that CYPC were interviewed/researched about. » CYPC themselves referred to being inspired or impacted by a GFC staff member or referred to GFC by name when describing an impact (very rare but did occur).
Inferred contribution, as the contribution is not fully clear or specified	The connection back to GFC was not so clear and was mainly inferred when: » GFC had provided general strengthening to the organisation, improving services or capacities, but it was not clear how this was directly connected to the impacts CYPC mentioned. For example, when GFC supported the partner's general efficiency, reach, and growth through the project manager that the partner hired with GFC funding, but this project manager was not connected with much CYPC outreach or support, we have noted the contribution to CYPC as inferred/unclear. » Sometimes CYPC that participated in the GIS interviews and creative exercises were not directly connected to the partner's activities that GFC supported or influenced, or the comments they made could not be linked back to a partner activity connected to GFC (e.g. they were CYPC that recently joined the organisation while GFC funded the organisation a year or two ago; or when the CYPC available to participate in the research did not have extensive involvement with GFC funded activities and instead spoke of the organisation's impact as a whole, etc.)
No contribution to GFC in any way	There were almost no instances of this, but this category refers to if CYPC mentioned an impact that is unrelated to activities or services that the partner organisation provides and therefore cannot be traced back to GFC.

42 Calculated out of the 24 partners we researched for impacts on children, young people, and communities.

Impacts at individual level

Improved future prospects (e.g. careers, education, lives)

17 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

4 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Numerous young people, and their parents, talked about how they have more confidence for their future prospects or careers due to working with GFC's partners (21 partners). In some cases, this was due to young people "turning their lives around" and pursuing a better and healthier path through the support of the partner organisation. In most cases, young people's prospects improved through the development of new skills (or access to quality education, through access to new networks, exposure to new opportunities, work experiences at the partner organisation, support to enrol in training or higher education, and sometimes through specific careers guidance. For instance, in Kenya, young people from one partner spoke about how the mentoring, guidance and career support had helped them make decisions on future pathways and shift their mindsets in positive ways. One young person said they had gained a positive outlook, the biggest impact for her had been advice to take a vocational pathway through which she had now acquired skills and was supporting her family. There were many CYPC who expressed that the partner organisation had changed their life, with descriptions such as "[the organisation] has changed my life because we don't have many resources, but they've supported me, and I've felt that change in me, pushing me to move forward". Indeed, many young people across several partners expressed that they have bigger ambitions for themselves (e.g., with many mentioning that they now want to become teachers, nurses, doctors).

Increased confidence

14 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

4 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

There was a frequently mentioned theme that community members, especially young people, developed their confidence through their involvement with GFC-funded partners (18 partners). Many children and young people expressed that through participating in partner organisation activities they became less shy, "*coming out of my shell*", being able to speak to new people, standing up for themselves, developing self-esteem and self-belief. Children, young people, and communities also expressed that the platforms provided to them by partner organisations and GFC gave them a sense of importance. For example, one child expressed, "*There used to be a bad reputation about youth, so everyone who attended [the organisation] was seen as 'bad.' Now I see them with enthusiasm and a sense of identity; they are young artists, entrepreneurs, change-makers, and resilient*", and "*Little by little, our ideas and thoughts are changing, making us stronger and more secure in our convictions, which has a positive impact on both our lives and our communities*". Young people attributed their increased confidence to developing skills that they were proud of, public-speaking or performing in front of people, and exposure to new experiences, environments, or opportunities (e.g., leadership opportunities, both big and small, taking part in a council, an external event, or leading daily activities).

CYPC (especially young people) gaining leadership skills

10 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

2 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Many organisations provided young people with leadership-building skills via formal and informal opportunities (12 partners). Five organisations ran youth councils, youth steering groups, or child parliaments and four organisations (in the deep dives) were youth-led so young people built further leadership skills by managing GFC's funding and receiving trainings by GFC. Some organisations also hired young people and gave them leadership roles and responsibilities, and a few organisations employed previous (young) service-users. Organisations also supported youth leadership skills by inviting young people into decision-making boards or training young people to be peer educators.

Informal approaches to encouraging youth leadership involved organisations providing opportunities for YP to run daily activities, manage classrooms or sports teams (e.g. children mentioned learning how to assign tasks based on the strengths of team members), and lead or facilitate programme sessions. Where they were operating, these activities were flagged by participants as being transformative in enabling them to build confidence in their role, gain leadership, management, and decision-making experience, and develop a sense of self and community.

Other improved skills (communication, public-speaking, facilitation, literacy, independence)

7 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

2 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Children and young people in particular mentioned that they improved their public-speaking skills by presenting or facilitating sessions at events that partner organisations encouraged them to attend. Young people expressed sentiments such as "*Prior to this I would not feel comfortable speaking to 5 people in a room, let alone 50, but now I feel I can fill up spaces I wouldn't have filled up before*".

Community members from one partner mentioned that they gained skills on how to initiative conversations about sex education. Children from three partners expressed that they had improved their reading and writing skills, and children from one partner mentioned learning how to be more independent.

Awareness of rights and important societal issues

8 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

5 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Many CYPC expressed that as a result of partner activities, they gained an increased awareness of their rights or of important societal topics that impact their communities (e.g. child marriage, violence against women, gender norms and masculinities, radicalisation, grooming, sexual health, etc.) (13 partners). For community members from four partners, this was also linked to practical guidance on how to claim rights and what to do in cases of exploitation, with several children expressing "*before the arrival of [partner org], we did not know anything about our rights, what is right for us, what is wrong for us, how to stop us if something is not right*". In several cases, learning about rights and societal issues led to partners mobilising communities on this topic (see below on Impacts at Community-level).

Safe spaces and community-creation

4 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

6 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

CYPC spoke about partner organisations creating a safe, judgement-free, and inclusive space for them (10 partners). For example, young people from a partner organisation reiterated how much they appreciated the community space being open in the evenings, as there are no other safe places for young people to go in the neighbourhood. Many CYPC also mentioned that the organisation's space was inclusive for their various mental, social, emotional, and special needs (two partners). A large number of interviewees from across the world spoke about partner organisation's as being their ***"family"* or their *"home"***. For example, CYPC from another partner expressed how the space represented "*newly found sisterhood*" to them; a child from another partner said, "*a lot of us come from broken homes, so [partner org] is like a family environment … one of a kind*"; many children described staff members as caring and supportive family members. In this way, partner organisations helped young people form friendships. In some cases, organisations helped bring people from different backgrounds together (two partners). CYP engaging with two partners also mentioned that as they became less shy and more motivated to distance themselves from negative thoughts, they felt empowered to form deeper, more meaningful connections with others.

Health (nutrition, mental wellbeing, physical health)

6 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

4 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

CYPC described many impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing, including as a result of better nutrition, sports, feeling supported, cared for, and safe, and building friendships (10 partners). The feeling of having a safe space and a close community had positive impacts on mental health (two partners); e.g. "*coming here I have others that understand what I'm going through and we talk to each other*". Children from two organisations also mentioned that having improved nutrition helped them focus better in class. Parents appreciated that the organisations cared for their children's overall wellbeing, reaching out if children miss workshops, checking on them when they are sick, and providing medication when needed. As one parent stated: "*Through regular phone calls and home visits, [the organisation] has kept close follow-ups, ensuring children receive the emotional and social support they need to adapt and thrive in their environment.*" Children also feel understood and supported when they feel sad; one child shared "*they notice when someone is feeling bad and needs to talk – the teachers see it, talk to the students, and take them to a private space where they feel comfortable to open up.*"

Regulating emotions and having better relationships

4 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

2 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Children, young people, and their parents talked about how participating in partner activities helped CYP (especially boys) calm down, have an outlet or place to express themselves, and therefore noticed better relationships at home (6 partners). One mother shared, "*It was a challenge for [the organisation] to calm [a child] during a crisis, but on one occasion, a friend helped calm him down. I was surprised because his classmates now know how to help my son during his crisis, and they're not scared of him*". With regards to another partner, a community member shared that boys have learned to regulate their anger and become more invested in their education – "*I couldn't imagine that this boy could change like this*".

Joy (particularly related to learning)

3 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

1 partner

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

A less frequently mentioned impact, but visible in different contexts around the world, nonetheless, was children expressing that they were happy, excited, joyful, and motivated from engaging in partner organisation activities (4 partners). Children mainly mentioned this in relation to their studies and school activities, e.g. "*I feel happy dancing and singing in school*"; "*I feel good because the teachers care and because they treat boys and girls the same way*", "*I'm excited to come to school*", "*I feel very happy, and I have a lot of fun. Before, we just received classes, but now we get excited every time they come, and I learn more and more*". Parents also mentioned that with regards to a new learning centre the partner organisation established, children want to be there all the time.

Impacts at community or systemic level

Improved access to and retention in quality education

13 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

2 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

When speaking about system level changes for children, young people and communities, a large number spoke about improving access to quality education for CYPC and helping them stay in education (15 partners). This involved partners **establishing schools, learning centres, tutoring or tuition support, and extracurricular learning activities**. Young people, their parents, and wider community members globally reflected on how important access to education is and has been for themselves, their children and their communities. In some cases, teachers and parents from different organisations noted this was due to **improved teaching styles** (that GFC had provided training on).

Many partners supported those from **disadvantaged backgrounds** (socio-economic disadvantage, ethnic/indigenous disadvantage, disability disadvantage, etc.) to attend school, and so their support was seen as a facilitator of inclusion, community growth, and **empowerment of youth traditionally excluded** from education. Organisations sometimes delivered specialist education: for instance, one organisation runs a school that integrates able-bodied and differently abled students. Another organisation runs enriching extra-curricular activities (with GFCs funds), including poetry programmes. Another organisation delivers digital skills courses (basic and intermediate).

One organisation (solely through GFC's funding) runs a school for 200 children from a displaced community. These niche specialisms were discussed as really important by staff, students and parents alike. For instance, in the case of the inclusive school and the school for displaced children– parents spoke about how it looks like one of the most expensive schools but is for some of the poorest students. One organisation that has run poetry programmes in an informal settlement school with GFC funds, spoke about how they had shifted the view of people from informal settlements 'from a place of crime to a place of poetry'. Lastly, in the organisation that provides digital skills training, people emphasised how access to digital skills is so inaccessible for people from the informal settlement due to the high costs of equipment and internet access – so this training programme, which has good employment prospects, has a big impact.

Three organisations specifically mentioned how they **support girls to excel in education**. In one school, a programme primarily funded by GFC prevented 60 girls from dropping out of education. Girls from another organisation expressed how they now access higher levels of education than before. This was often attributed to the norms change around gender that the organisation created (See below).

Shifting harmful societal norms (particularly around gender)

10 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

2 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Many organisations succeeded in shifting attitudes around certain harmful cultural practices (FGM and child marriage) and attitudes towards women (12 partners). Many achieved this through **community mobilisation** and community-led efforts, and specialised workshops on gender roles and equality. A community member reflects "*Before, abuse against girls and women was considered normal, but now, thanks to what we've learned, that perception has changed, and we are contributing to reducing that violence.*" Teachers affiliated to partners around the world have also begun adopting a more inclusive approach, **integrating boys and girls into the same activities** and removing gender separation in educational interventions. Similarly, parents have shifted their **views on their daughters' roles**: a teacher states, "*If you mentioned menstruation or any related topic, they [parents] would say they were going to report you … Since they [organisation] arrived, parents' attitude towards girls' participation has been different*" and a child confirmed "*My family didn't want me to play soccer, but [the organisation's] teachers spoke to my parents and got their permission.*" Similar ideas were echoed by children in three other organisations in different regions.

For example, five organisations (spread out across the world) **supported young women affected by FGM** or child marriage. Some organisations supported girls and women escaping these practices by providing opportunities for education. Other organisations carried out advocacy campaigns. In the case of one organisation, the chief of a community spoke about how the partner organisation supported them to **speak to the community about the effects of FGM and girl's empowerment**. GFC was the main funder of the organisation's work in this community.

Advocates felt they had "been given a voice to speak" – they were trained and equipped with knowledge on GBV and referral pathways. The partner also conducted outreach work where they come into the community to talk to them about education and life as a whole – CYPC described them as having a flexible, cooperative and respectful approach which helped their work in the community. All interviewees from this community reported that **FGM went down** during the time that the partner organisation worked there (the chief estimated a reduction of %20), and women spoke about how they had not let their daughters go through FGM. In another case, a partner noted how after five years of work investing in girls' education and awareness of early marriage, they noticed that community elders who were initially against this work have come to accept that it is grounded in law.

In a community who benefited from the SALT approach, a community women's group (of 200 women) was launched with the aim of discussing women's progress and involvement in the community. Women interviewed mentioned that a widow was given a platform to speak during an important event for the 1st time, which "*motivated other women to come forward*". CYPC from this community mentioned that there is **less teasing and taunting of girls by boys** in the street, and four child marriages have been prevented in the community. In another example, the community had a case where a man sexually assaulted a young girl. The women of the community took a stand and said that his actions must be investigated, and with the organisation, they took the case to court and the preparator got sent to jail.

Community-led change-making

9 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

3 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

There was a strong theme globally of communities taking ownership and tackling systemic issues (12 partners). In some instances this meant partners providing trainings or supporting communities to **construct a structure or for itself to manage their own development affairs** (two partners). In some cases, by keeping children away from unsafe environments and encouraging them to focus on their personal development, grant partners inspired CYP to think big and become more engaged in contributing to their communities. In one instance, an organisation supported people to develop a stronger sense of community and have **greater empathy towards vulnerable people** through modelling inclusion themselves. Additionally, by considering people's ideas and wishes, a sense of belonging and empowerment has been fostered, encouraging continued commitment to supporting the community: "*I worked for four years [with the organisation] teaching classes, even though I had little education myself. It's important to help the community*".

In many cases, **change-making was ignited through an individual that got inspired by taking part in a partner organisation's activities**. Several young people affiliated to different organisations around the world mentioned addressing issues affecting their communities (e.g. corruption, homelessness, child marriage, racial inequality, gender inequality). This includes youth with disabilities, who highlight feeling they now have the **skills and confidence to guide others**: "*I've learned to identify and address my community's needs, while becoming a role model for others, helping them grow and contribute to the collective well-being*". In another example, young girls from a racial minority spoke about feeling encouraged to take the reins, share their opinions, ask questions, and lead work to tackle systemic issues such as gender equality. A staff member from this organisation expressed that GFC's support encouraged them to "*dream of change in ways that they were not before*".

In another case, a young person established a hostel for youth in need of accommodation. In two other cases (in different countries), young people successfully rallied more children and youth to join their groups and generated wide interest from communities to tackle corruption and gender violence. A young person mentioned realising how they could contribute to the Black Lives Matter protests; another young person mentioned being able to give speeches at a Women's Day marches. In examples from two organisations, people from the community were officially hired (paid for through GFC funding) and were contributing to positive changes in the community through their work.

There were also examples of communities affiliated to several partners engaging in change-making as a result of the SALT training they received. CYPC described gaining skills, confidence, and awareness of their change-making potential, leading them to create meaningful improvements in their community, rather than depending on others. Before SALT, they describe not being so active. For example, **community members now carry out research on issues they think are relevant to investigate, leading to concrete changes** such as support for those at risk of suicide, thus reducing suicide rates in the community. Children from the community now do dream-building exercises and come up with topics such as ending child marriage and overcoming gender bias by creating awareness through street play in the community.
In another community, there was an abandoned kindergarten that young people were hanging out in to get drunk. The community, supported by GFC's partner came together and contacted all alcohol shop owners and decided collectively to ban alcohol sales to minors. Everyone was involved in this decision, which made it possible to create change. Moreover, the community revived and re-opened the kindergarten, so children are now attending school. Lastly, alcohol consumption among young people has reduced.

Families and communities prioritising education

6 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

3 partners

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

A common shift mentioned by CYPC is how communities have started to **place more value to and get more involved with the education of children**, as result of partner organisation activities (9 partners). For example, though parent counselling and parent education sessions, parents themselves gained awareness in how to best support their children's education and health. In many cases, this was linked to **partner organisation's work in shifting harmful attitudes about girls' abilities**. In one case, following community-led initiatives (using the SALT process) where the community decided to reduce drop-out rates from schools, parents have now started **regularly visiting schools and asking about the performance of children**. Several families also decided to send girls back to school. Indeed, reflecting on the root causes of child trafficking and child marriage led communities to take action, together with partner organisations, to raise awareness and promote the importance of education for children. In one community, due to community-led efforts in reviving an education centre, many parents who used to consider child marriage are now enrolling their children in school and encouraging them to learn and live better lives. In another community (where only 5% of people have been to formal school), residents have started **holding community meetings about how they can improve the school** run by the partner organisation, and have started pooling donations for education.

Many parents interviewed expressed how partner organisations engaging communities (beyond only CYP) in their activities, facilitated wider changes at home, creating more **favourable environments for children's' development**. The following sentiment was expressed by many community members around the world: "*Before, parents would send their children to buy cigarettes or beer, but now, that's not happening because a lot of work has been done with the community*".

A holistic community approach supported family support of education. For example, employment opportunities helped parents to pay for certain school costs, and other needs. A number of parents, who were also employed by the school, spoke about how their employment had facilitated them sending their children to the school, and that they had been supported and cared for by the organisation when they faced difficulties. Another organisation, supporting the whole family is a core part of their model, and they run a number of community employment support.

Reduction in violence (particularly gender-based violence)

6 partners

Clear and strong contribution to CYPC impacts

1 partner

Inferred/not so clear contribution to CYPC impacts

Deeply connected to the work in addressing harmful attitudes and cultural norms, many communities where partner organisations worked experienced a reduction in violence (particularly gender-based violence) (7 partners). This was **linked to rights awareness** and knowing what to do when spotting suspicious or harmful behaviour, as well as through the dedicated protection work carried out by partner organisations.

For example, one organisation supported the creation **safer communities through their community awareness programme**, stopping child labour, putting in place a child protection committee, and keeping children safe in the school they run. Children are aware of how to report abuse, calling and denouncing abusers, and the community has observed a reduction in child trafficking. In another case, through community-led development efforts, the community decided to work on the issues of child trafficking and domestic abuse.

The community was not aware what to do in these situations, but now they have gained knowledge in how to handle these situations (who to contact, etc.). **Child trafficking incidences and child marriage has reduced** (a community member was able to identify an incidence of someone being trafficked and rescue them because of the Child Protection and Safeguarding training they received). For two partner organisations, GFC directly helped them rescue trafficked girls through facilitating contacts with teams in other countries.

One organisation helped reduce violence in communities through long-term work with leaders of gangs. This had a knock-on effect of creating safer school environments and removing barriers for fearful community members of attending school in those areas.

05

Illustrating the contribution of GFC

In this chapter, we showcase individual stories about partner organisations. Each story includes when GFC entered and what it provided to the partner organisation, how this impacted them, and how this in turn impacted children, young people, and communities.

We are aware that 'impact' does not happen in a linear way like this and that especially with the community-led model that GFC and partners support, impacts happen in reciprocal and cyclical ways (communities influence partners and GFC; partners impact GFC, etc.). For the purposes of this study, we are shining the light on the pathways through which GFC contributes to partners and CYPC so that GFC can learn about its impact.

Since these pathways are so unique to each partner and the specific community they work with, there is no singular and generalisable story/formula of how GFC contributes to change. The reader will find hundreds of examples of GFC's impact in the above Findings chapter but will noticeably see few case studies perfectly demonstrating how X mechanism led to Y impact for partners which led to Z change in communities in a contained and tidy way. **GFC's menu of services come together in various configurations, creating various combinations of impact.** This chapter presents a selection of stories about partner organisations to illustrate the different ways GFC's inputs contribute to impacts. Through these illustrative stories, the different dissected impacts, mechanisms, and limitations mentioned throughout the Findings chapter should hopefully be evident and the ways in which factors come together in unique ways for each partner highlighted.

Above: © Jon Super

5.1 Contribution Story #1

GFC provided this youth-led partner with less than $50,000 for a short time (1-2 years). Their annual primary grant funding represented an extra-large proportion of their starting budget (over 50%).

The GFC funding was used to fund activities and make activities more accessible to a wider group of CYPC. The relationship with GFC was relaxed, they expressed that "*we could call them whenever needed*". GFC provided some NFS such as workshops and networking opportunities.

Impact of GFC on partner organisation

GFC were trusting and allowed them to use the funding in the way they *"thought best"*. The reporting and application were "*great*" and "*stress-free*" because there was no form-filling. They appreciated how GFC were patient with them, giving them space when they were slow to provide things GFC needed. The funding helped them pause and think of how they could improve and respond to new issues that emerged. For example, when they realised that there was an issue in their leadership, they used GFC's funding to address this and solve the problem.

Even though this partner would have survived without GFC's support, GFC's funding supported the sustainability of the organisation, as the leadership and management situation stabilised. The NFS was not perceived as very useful, "*they were trying to help, but they didn't really know what we needed*". They provided general solutions to their specific problems. They suggested to keep the NFS but make it more tailored and expertise-specific to the organisations.

Impact of partner on CYPC

This organisation provides leadership opportunities to young people. Many CYPC say that it helped them with their confidence (speaking to new people, trying new activities, improving their self-belief and self-esteem). CYPC learned public speaking skills and business skills. They networked with others, which helped their careers. Through the GFC funding, a group of young people got experience in budgeting, taking responsibility, and planning meetings.

Many interviewees said that the organisation provides a vital opportunity to socialise and help CYPC with their mental health. Many children described making "friends for life". GFC's funding helped the activities become more accessible and affordable to more people, especially to those whose families might have financial difficulties.

5.2 Contribution Story #2

GFC provided this partner with around $50,000 for a short time (1-2 years). They received a small proportion of their annual starting budget in annual primary grants (up to 10%).

The GFC funding was used to fund a school which they did not have any other funding for, as well as staff salaries and office expenses. The partner had a close relationship with a GFC staff member, describing this person as soft, helpful and friendly. GFC provided NFS in the form of trainings on fundraising, computing, safeguarding, capacity-building support and custom help.

Impact of GFC on partner organisation

GFC were their only financial donor during this time. The school was struggling financially before GFC's funding was introduced, and without the support, it may have had to close. The funding was used to sustain the school, and now it is running post GFC funding. The reporting requirements were light and relaxed, which made the partner feel trusted and relieved pressure. Staff/teacher skills, motivation, confidence, and team bonding improved since GFC, which positively impacted staff wellbeing, their quality of work and efficiency. GFC also helped them develop wellbeing policies for staff, and gender harassment committees to provide female staff with a safe environment to raise their voice. GFC also provided the organisation with networking opportunities, which led to the organisation learning a lot from other organisations through sharing strengths and specialisations. Teachers from this partner received training from another GFC partner organisation through a GFC collaboration grant, and learnt about using sports for self-development, leadership and gender empowerment purposes, which the partner than implemented at school.

Impact of partner on CYPC

This organisation works to improve access to education for indigenous communities. With GFC's support, the partner was able to increase the number of children they worked with from displaced communities. These children were able to receive high quality education and maintained regular attendance in schools. CYPC also experienced leadership opportunities, such as the school's child parliament and sports teams. Parents' views about girls' abilities also shifted, with more parents allowing their girls to play outside and remain in education. The community started to prioritise education and hold community meetings about how they can improve the school. The organisation has also been able to tackle youth with substance abuse issues and have started focusing on efforts to stopping child marriage.

5.3 Contribution Story #3

GFC provided this woman-led partner with around $100k worth of funding for a medium-term (3-5 years), and the annual funding amount was a medium proportion of their annual starting budget (between 11-25%).

GFC's funding was predominantly used to fund young women's access to education, and on supporting young women's upkeep. The partner describes their relationship with GFC as like a family, and that GFCs entry into the partnership was based on trust and seeking to learn about the partner. The non-financial support they took part in included professional development courses to support a new leader, organisational development coaches, networking opportunities, and other types of training (safeguarding, M&E, movement building).

Impact of GFC on partner organisation

GFC contributed to the growth and sustainability of this organisation most notably through the comprehensive training and support given to the leader of the organisation (TBR, NFS). The partner noted how the trust, support and training that they received from GFC in those early days, was crucial in allowing them to develop the skills and confidence needed to develop the organisation. Additionally, through modelling GFCs approach, and the improved confidence and skills of the lead, the organisation developed in a participatory and more horizontal way – involving staff in decision making, engaging with other local youth forums, and developing a girl's council. At the beginning of their relationship with GFC the organisation was not able to access other external/ international funding due to not having the necessary structures in place. GFC supported them to put structures in place (through training), gave them the confidence to pursue other funders, made connections to new and relevant funders, and supported on funding applications. These, alongside the reputation they gained through working with GFC, enabled them to secure funds after GFC left (although at times they have still struggled with funding post-GFC).

Impact of partner on CYPC

This partner was contributing to shifting perspectives on violence against girls and on gender roles, through supporting girls fleeing violence and by investing in girls' education which, in turn, was shifting community perspectives as they see the benefits of educating girls. The partner supports girls who would not otherwise have access, to access education. Many young women spoke about having gained confidence through this education, and through feeling valued by the organisation and being given leadership opportunities. These included taking part in the girl's council, external opportunities, and community mentoring programmes run by the partner. They felt supported and listened to by the organisation, with some describing it as a family. Many of these key impacts – improvements in confidence, access to education, leadership skills, and improving future prospects – are strongly connected to GFCs support to the partner through GFC funds directly supporting education, and key participatory mechanisms (leadership skills, the girls council) that were developed with GFCs support.

5.4 Contribution Story #4

GFC provided this partner with around $200k worth of funding over a long-term (6+ years), the annual funding received represented a large proportion of their annual starting budget (between 25-50%).

GFCs funding was predominantly used to develop a range of projects supporting the community (recreational, gender, education, psychological). It was also used to pay staff salaries.

The partner experienced a strong trust-based relationship with GFC, demonstrated by GFC not directing them in what they should do, taking time to visit them and having shared values in supporting direct work with communities. Although the partner felt that their relationship with GFC had shifted in recent times, with a greater emphasis on GFC's interests. In terms of non-financial support, they took part in technical training and partner networking – although they felt that many training topics were not relevant to them, and were unsure on how much they could use the non-financial support offer.

Impact of GFC on partner organisation

GFC funds have enabled the delivery and development of the partners core programmes to support excluded young people and their families. A key development to their approach due to GFCs continuous funding has been expanding their focus to take a whole family approach which has allowed them to build a better relationship with the community, and to better understand what their needs are. The flexibility of the funds has allowed them to make strategic decisions in how to use funds, for instance, using the funds to cover salaries which enabled continuity of programme delivery.

The partner credits GFCs support in allowing them to improve the skills in their team (through new pedagogical approaches, hiring specific skills, improve communication), in a way that has improved their ways of working with communities: "We have noticed a significant change in our colleagues' ability to make decisions and identify the needs of families. They can now more easily recognise what each family requires at any given time.". They have also learned from sharing ideas with GFC, and other partners, and GFC trainings have enhanced their strategies and internal processes, as well as identifying areas for improvement in their programmes.

Impact of partner on CYPC

The partner has supported young people's development, both in terms of skills and knowledge and in social and emotional skills. Particularly as the community has access to fewer resources, workshops on entrepreneurship, agriculture, and plant cultivation have enabled them to gain economic skills, and generate more income for their families, with some even opening their own small food businesses. The partner has also facilitated a strong sense of belonging and community – by providing practical tools, a positive environment, and integrating community leaders they have built trust with the community. Young people have been more motivated to take up community initiatives, and some families have noted greater economic stability (due to partner entrepreneurship/employment support) which has also fostered a strong sense of community.

Young people supported said they felt listened to and valued – that the partner listens to issues they raise and, crucially, takes action to address them, improving their wellbeing. Young people noticed and appreciated that the partner specifically focusses them and their families' wellbeing– this also increased young people's trust in the partner, and sense of community. By better understanding community needs, the partner has tried to counter systemic inequalities that they face, for instance support for girls to access healthcare services. Community members recognise that the partner is working to empower young people "This type of empowerment is essential for countering power imbalances, as it ensures the voices of the less privileged are heard.", but that the systemic inequalities in health and education are beyond its reach.

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06

Conclusions and recommendations

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This GIS was conducted to investigate the impact that GFC's model of support has on local community organisations around the world (i.e., GFC's grant partners); and GFC's indirect impact on children, young people, and the communities through these organisations that work with them.

The Study followed a qualitative design, involving the methodologies of CA and MSC. CA was used to assess the contribution of GFC to partners, and then their contribution to communities, across the pathways of change identified in GFC's Thery of Change. Most Significant Change provided a way for the Global Impact Study to capture a nuanced picture of impact through gathering SoC or stories of impact with grant partners.

Data was collected through KIIs and deep dive Country Research. 53 Key Informant Interviews were conducted with 25 grant partner organisations, 21 GFC staff, five members of GFC's participatory leadership structure (YLC, PAG, Ambassadors), and two donors. The deep dives were a unique aspect of the methodology, involving participatory principles and an approach involving PPAR, where grant partners conducted research on other grant partners.

This involved training a total of 31 locally-based researchers (from GFC grant partner organisations) across four countries (India, Guatemala, Kenya, the UK) representing regions that GFC works in, where they carried out extensive 'case study' research on 24 GFC grant partner organisations. For each of these organisations, locally-based researchers conducted interviews and creative exercises with 1-3 staff members and 3-6 children, young people, and community members. At the end of our data collection, we gathered a total of 377 interviews and creative submissions, providing us over a thousand pages detailing stories of change and stories of impact.

These stories were analysed by a core team and validated through workshops with local researchers. Our findings indicate the following conclusions around partners' perception of GFC's financing model, the impact of the model on partners and CYPC, as well as an assessment of the enabling and limiting mechanisms that we recommend are either continued or improved in future, drawing together the summaries presented throughout the report and adding additional/overarching recommendations.

6.1 Trust-based relationships

The relationship between GFC and its partners is consistently perceived as trusting, supportive and collaborative, with diverse partners feeling valued, especially during challenges.

While the relationship is **perceived as close, caring and approachable by all, as well as unique** compared to other funders, some partners maintain a professional level, whereas others – particularly women-led and small to medium-sized organisations – view GFC as an extension of their own due to its deep support and collaborative mindset. As a result, nearly all partners report **increased autonomy**, feeling empowered to make decisions, stay true to their vision and values, make mistakes and take on challenges. Half of the partners **feel motivated and confident in their work**, knowing GFC will provide support when needed, feeling encouraged to rethink and improve internal processes and focus on implementing impactful activities, as opposed to focusing on bureaucratic donor requirements.

GFC's approach has also influenced partners, particularly in SSA, to **adopt similar collaborative, trust-based approaches internally and with CYPC**, improving staff job satisfaction, empowerment, and wellbeing at both personal and organisational levels. TBR is especially impactful for small and medium-sized, women and youth-led organisations that often lack formal structures or financial backing to be confident in their leadership and assert views openly to donors.

Our research has identified **three key enabling mechanisms** for the above impacts which we recommend GFC continues or furthers to enhance TBR-related impacts, and **two key limiting mechanisms** which we recommend GFC improves to encourage more impactful TBR.

Key enabling mechanisms

1

Prioritisation of staff's allocation of time to enhancing TBR

Implementing successful TBR is time intensive and requires staff that can spend significant amounts of their time nurturing relationships with partners, and providing tailored support thereafter. We recommend GFC **continues to invest in roles and consider the overall allocation of grantees within any particular staff members' portfolio to ensure the required amount of time to developing strong connections and understanding with partners**, as this will be key to break down walls, address scepticism around donor-partner power dynamics, develop a space where partners feel safe and not judged to raise concerns, and to give adequate time for partners and GFC staff to get to know each other. This is particularly important as partners' contexts are often challenging to operate in and require both patience and time flexibility from GFC, as well as swift responses to immediate concerns or emergencies, both of which are time intensive. Particularly for larger and extra-large organisations, this is rare and GFC is unique when compared to other funders for its level of support and open and available communication.

2

GFC's internal recruitment approach

TBRs are developed on a day-to-day basis, and require tailored, genuine care and attention from GFC staff to ensure partners of diverse characteristics trust the relationship and feel safe to engage – hiring appropriately has been critical to ensure TBR is implemented successfully. We recommend GFC **continues hiring GFC staff in line with their existing recruitment approach**, as hiring staff **aligned with GFC values**, who embody **respect for partners' expertise**, **genuinely care** for partners' wellbeing, prioritise CYPC's dignity and understand partners' contextual challenges and visibility of outcomes, has been a key contributor to building/maintaining TBR.

3

Light-touch monitoring requirements

Consolidating TBRs requires accompanying funder-related requirements in line with a trust-based approach, with monitoring requirements that value less visible impacts, understand changing priorities and don't require meeting specific targets. We recommend **GFC continues with their light-touch monitoring requirements** as it has contributed to consolidating TBRs, where aspects of partner operations traditionally considered to be limitations (such as staff lacking high-degree qualifications, being unregistered, or being unable to measure targeted impacts) are not a concern/restriction for GFC partners, contributing to a stronger mutual sense of trust.

Key limiting mechanisms

1

GFC staff in-person visits

TBR requires building profound connections and understanding of partners' context and operations, which are often difficult to explain out loud or to understand if not seen directly. While virtual meetings enable direct communication, they often lead to less human connections with voids in understanding, including around the context of emerging partner needs and difficulties.

We recommend GFC **further prioritises in-person visits from GFC staff to partner sites**, as virtual meetings have not been an adequate replacement and have limited TBR to some extent. Encouraging more in-person visits will strongly contribute to:

» building relationships with wider staff, including ground-level implementers;

» improving understanding of project reach and capabilities which improves tailoring of NFS and overall support;

» demonstrating GFC interest and commitment to the relationship and to partners' views.

2

Opportunities for guidance

TBR requires a two-way process of relationship-building. While GFC and partners are equals in the relationship, **proactive knowledge sharing** and guidance where GFC has most experience would help **nascent/small** and youth-led partners in particular better understand funders' ways of working both in the relationship with GFC, and more broadly with other funders. GFC often relies on partners requesting support as needed – we recommend GFC **more proactively provides opportunities to give tailored, transparent and informal guidance to partners, when they confirm this would be helpful**, on how to strategise internally, and better understand how GFC makes decisions, as well as the wider funding context. This could include ideas and suggestions on partner strategies, or increased insights on partner performance at the end of a programme lifecycle, would contribute to more open relationships that naturally leverage GFC's experience and give partners confidence and perspective in their work, their progress and how to pitch to other funders.

6.2 Flexible funding

GFC's FF approach was highly valued by all partners, with many highlighting its uniqueness compared to other funders – particularly for its flexibility, timely disbursement, emergency funding support and light monitoring/reporting.

Despite diverse characteristics, **most partners allocated funds to similar areas**, including staff (e.g., salaries), programme delivery (e.g., materials, rent, activities), internal policies (e.g., safeguarding, wellbeing) and, for some organisations in E&E, investments (e.g., consultants, new technologies), travel and reserves. While medium to extra-large organisations typically used funds to complement existing resources, smaller organisations focused on core service delivery. As a result of FF, most partners report **feeling trusted and empowered to allocate funds according to their needs and vision**, boosting confidence and a sense of equality with GFC. More than half also note an **increased ability to invest in improving internal processes and structures**, which are often overlooked by other funders, leading to enhanced staff motivation and wellbeing, as well as greater operational efficiency (e.g., technology for more precise interventions, consolidated strategies, better responses to CYPC needs).

Despite the small size of funding, most partners felt **more confident to prioritise community needs, respond to emerging challenges in real-time, and involve CYPC in decision-making**, strengthening CYPC's trust in partners. For small-medium organisations with fewer funding streams, FF helped ensure uninterrupted continuation and sustainability of activities, both directly (e.g., service delivery) and indirectly (e.g., staff salaries, training, legal fees, and visibility).

Our research has identified **three key enabling mechanisms** for the above impacts which we recommend GFC continues or furthers to enhance FF-related impacts, and **two key limiting mechanisms** which we recommend GFC improves to encourage more impactful FF.

Key enabling mechanisms

1

Flexibility of funding

FF requires funders to guarantee flexibility in practice, with other funding requirements aligning with the expectations of that flexibility. We recommend GFC **continues to provide FF coherently and ensure flexibility in practice**, as it significantly enhances partner autonomy by allowing them to allocate resources as desired, based on community needs, emerging priorities and free from the constraints of funder expectations or requirements. This flexibility encourages risk-taking, innovation, and learning from mistakes, making it especially valuable for shorter-term funds and smaller grants that may not aim for long-term transformation, but nevertheless enable partners to address gaps and continue meeting CYPC needs. A key element of this flexibility is it is formally **supported by light reporting requirements**, which prevent partners from being burdened by bureaucratic paperwork, and allow them to prioritise funding according to their needs. This not only frees up time and reduces stress related to impact measurement and compliance, but also fosters quicker responses, greater trust in GFC from staff, and stronger trust from communities in partners. This flexibility is most impactful when combined with TBR, which cultivates a trusting environment that empowers partners to confidently use this flexibility, make independent decisions and embrace risk-taking.

2

Timely disbursement of funds

FF is particularly impactful when it enables partners to respond financially to all sorts of emerging challenges in their context, including emergencies. We recommend GFC **continues to provide timely disbursement of funds, including additional emergency disbursements to partners when needed**, as this enables quick responses to emerging needs. Accompanied by emotional support from TBRs, partners are better prepared financially and emotionally to mobilise resources as needed. Nevertheless, we encourage GFC to explore alternatives to funding delivered in annual cycles to further enhance fast mobilisation.

3

Grant partner selection

FF can result in inefficiencies and wasted resources if partners are not genuinely committed to advancing CYPC impacts, or if they engage in dishonesty or fraud. We **recommend GFC continues their existing grant partner selection approach**, as **it effectively identifies organisations that are deeply embedded in their communities** and committed to leveraging FF to its full potential. It also provides unique and transformative opportunities for organisations that might otherwise struggle to survive or grow due to other funders' lack of trust, often because they are unregistered, lack university-qualified staff, or are youth or women-led. However, it is crucial that FF is complemented by strong TBR which offers tailored guidance and support, particularly for nascent and youth-led organisations that are establishing themselves for the first time.

Key limiting mechanisms

1

Funding length

While organisations may already be deeply embedded in communities and able to respond to emerging needs, short funding periods limit long-term impact and divert focus away from maximising outcomes, as organisations must prioritise securing new funds. We recommend GFC **considers extending funding periods and prioritise long-term funding where possible**, either through fundraising and/or influencing GFC funders to fund for longer, to support the continuation of activities that require long-term investment to achieve meaningful impact, encourage partner sustainability and maintain community trust. Longer-term relationships with GFC have led to increased opportunities for securing new funding and receiving tailored and bespoke support, preventing organisations needing to divert resources or attention from service delivery. While funding extensions may occur later in the relationship, **clear communication regarding the duration of funding** at the outset is essential for effective partner planning.

2

Funding size

Where organisations aim to address the root causes of injustice and inequality, small funding amounts are often insufficient to drive systemic change and can be quickly depleted. We recommend GFC **considers increasing funding amounts (tailored to each partner)** to better enable partners to meet community expectations and achieve longer-term impact. **Larger funding amounts have proven to have the greatest effect on partner growth and confidence,** regardless of whether they are provided over short or long periods. When combined with longer funding periods, this approach has also demonstrated enhanced sustainability and a greater capacity to foster community-led, needs-based, and participatory change.

6.3 Non-financial support

GFC's NFS is widely regarded as impactful, particularly in SSA. Partners particularly valued networking opportunities and tailored training workshops, which were generally regarded as fun and engaging, as well as support in securing new funding.

Although not frequent, partners appreciated when this support continued even after funding had ended. Partners also appreciated GFC's participation in NFS participation, particularly in allowing opt-outs when time constraints were an issue. As a result of NFS, most organisations, smaller to medium sized and except in E&E, report **strengthened internal structures**, leading to clearer processes, improved efficiency, and enhanced collaborative management practices. These improvements stemmed largely from tailored training (e.g., on social media, team management, safeguarding and wellbeing policies, and participatory service delivery), as well as mentoring and bespoke advice (e.g., on addressing root causes of community challenges). Most partners across all regions also report **improved service delivery,** with SALT and LtP training being particularly effective in fostering participatory, collaborative approaches with CYPC, improving staff skills and boosting confidence in addressing community complexities.

Networking events also inspired partners (less frequently in Americas) to reflect on others' techniques and improve their service delivery, with some even creating peer networks for ongoing mentorship and collaboration. Women and youth-led organisations, often facing more barriers by traditional funders, report **increased access to funding** directly through networking events (i.e., initiating partnerships) and support with applications (particularly in SSA), and indirectly through bespoke advice, and enhanced reputation/credibility, and organisational structures from working with GFC.

Partners with longer, more intensive relationships with GFC accessed comparatively more funding due to greater opportunities to combine both direct and indirect support from GFC.

Our research has identified **two key enabling mechanisms** for the above impacts which we recommend GFC continues or furthers to enhance NFS-related impacts, and **three key limiting mechanisms** which we recommend GFC improves to encourage more impactful NFS.

Key enabling mechanisms

1

Tailored training workshops

Training workshops are most effective when they address specific needs. For GFC, most workshops were deemed relevant and impactful in enhancing all partners' internal structures and service delivery.

Workshops on the following have been particularly effective for most partners:

- **safeguarding support**, especially for women-led organisations;
- **SALT and LtP** sessions to promote participatory approaches both internally and with communities;
- **wellbeing support to adapt policies and incorporate wellbeing** into the working environment;
- **funding application support**.

We recommend GFC **continues to tailor training workshops to both generally shared (as above) as well as emerging partner needs**, ensuring they are interactive and engaging. Additionally, conducting some workshops in person and combining sessions with other partners, where possible, would help foster inter-partner collaboration and knowledge exchange.

2

Overall approach to NFS

NFS is most effective when partners are actively interested to engage with it and believe in its potential. GFC's approach to delivering NFS encourages participation and interest, enabling partners to leverage its potential. We recommend GFC **continues this approach to NFS**, particularly its **flexibility around attendance**, **openness to include wider partner staff (beyond only leaders), its fun and engaging session environment**, and **its modelling of practices (e.g., wellbeing) that align with the values GFC seeks to reflect**. This approach helps partners recognise the value of NFS, prioritise investing time in it, and be motivated to proactively request internal or search for external NFS opportunities as necessary.

Key limiting mechanisms

1

Funding support

While funding periods may inevitably be short, NFS aimed at enhancing partners' chances of securing new funds is invaluable and can equally transform partners long-term prospects. **When extending funding periods is not feasible**, we recommend GFC **focuses on providing more indirect support to help partners seek new funding.** This can include bespoke advice, sharing **opportunities to speak on panels, facilitating connections with donors**, sending more funding opportunities, and **building partner capacity in completing funding applications**. For partners with shorter-term grants or those in earlier stages with less experience and visibility, these opportunities — though not directly tied to specific applications — can significantly improve their chances of success. This will influence GFC's decision-making around expanding their partner portfolio or working with the same partners for a longer duration.

2

Partner capacity to leverage NFS

To maximise the impact of NFS opportunities, partners should have a clear understanding of the options available and feel prepared to engage with them. We recommend GFC **better communicates the full range of NFS services, providing consistent and ongoing updates to all partners.** It would be helpful to also share the **objectives of each opportunity**, allowing **partners to assess their relevance**, and support partners in identifying which options may align with their needs. Additionally, providing **guidance on how frequently they can engage** with these opportunities can help prevent partners from feeling they are 'taking advantage'. For services requiring interpersonal skills—such as networking events, group workshops, or meetings with funders—**offering preparatory training** would help partners feel more confident and better equipped to communicate, forge connections, and establish partnerships.

3

Tailored networking events

Networking events are most effective when they are tailored to the specific needs of attendees. In addition to outlining and sharing session objectives in advance, we recommend GFC **more broadly prioritises expertise-specific sessions and avoids generic sessions at partner convenings** to better align with attendees' expectations.

It is crucial that GFC ensures **convenings are scheduled at convenient times** and are **accessible to staff from all interested partner organisations** to avoid exclusion. With strong TBR, GFC can better guide partners on which opportunities are most relevant, connecting those working on similar topics or with shared goals, and support the creation of peer networks among them.

6.4 Overall package

All grant partners value GFC's model as a comprehensive package, with different elements prioritised at various times depending on partners' needs.

However, there is a general recognition of the effectiveness of the combined components, rather than viewing them as isolated support elements. While the model is perceived as a cohesive "package," not all partners fully understand the breadth of available opportunities or how to leverage them to their maximum potential. Nevertheless, partners across all regions report similar impacts as a result of combining elements in GFC's overall package:

- **Enhanced growth:** most partners report increased learning, expanded contacts, enhanced credibility, and improved access to new funding. This has been achieved through a combination of NFS (e.g., staff training, advice on processes and policies, connecting with partners, and participating in panels), TBR (e.g., encouragement and reassurance in service delivery), and FF (e.g., ability to take risks, pause and reflect, and invest in organisational strengthening).
- **Increased partner confidence and motivation:** partners feel better equipped to respond to difficult issues, protect community and staff safety and wellbeing, and maintain motivating working environments, where staff are paid and on time and there is reduced stress to meet client expectations. This has been facilitated by NFS (e.g., safeguarding training, wellbeing prioritisation, inspiration from sharing with other partners, experience speaking in events), TBR (e.g., emotional support during challenges, staying true to their vision), and FF (e.g., timely disbursements to pay staff on time, unrestricted funding to prioritise wellbeing, light reporting requirements).
- **Improved service delivery:** partners have adopted more egalitarian and participatory approaches in both staff environments and with CYPC. This has been supported by NFS (e.g., management training, SALT and LtP, learning new approaches from other partners), TBR (e.g., replication of trust-based systems and increased confidence), and FF (e.g., financial security for timely and sustained delivery, encouraged CYPC-led decisions on funding).
- **Enhanced sustainability**: GFC's model has supported partners' sustainability differently based on funding duration. For those with short-term funding, support has generally helped sustain activities that would otherwise have been halted, through NFS (e.g., strengthening internal structures, and learning from and collaborating with other partners), TBR (e.g., trusting their vision and aligning with like-minded funders) and FF (e.g., unrestricted funding for core costs or reserves, staff retention, multi-disciplinary teams and service delivery). For long-term funding partners, GFC's support has enabled self-sustained growth to no longer require GFC's assistance.

Our research has identified **one key enabling mechanism** for the above impacts which we recommend GFC continues or furthers to enhance package-related impacts, and **three key limiting mechanisms** which we recommend GFC reflect on/strengthen to encourage a more impactful package.

Key enabling mechanisms

1

Combination of package elements

While each element of GFC's model holds individual value, the components work most effectively when combined, providing holistic, transparent, and impactful support for partners. We recommend GFC **continues offering its model as a comprehensive package**, enabling partners to receive the best possible support and reinforcing the value of utilising various elements separately or together as needed. The following combinations have proven particularly impactful:

» **TBR → FF**: a trusting environment encouraged partners to confidently use FF to meet their own needs;

» **FF & NFS → TBR**: minimal reporting requirements, timely disbursements and an emphasis on internal capacity development alleviated pressure to meet specific funder expectations and deepened trust in GFC's intentions;

» **NFS → FF**: NFS training on service delivery methods (e.g., SALT, LtP) empowered partners to apply FF in a more community-driven, needs-based, and participatory manner;

» **FF & TBR → NFS**: minimal reporting requirements and a trust-based environment encouraged staff to prioritise participating in NFS activities and foster healthy working environments.

Key limiting mechanisms

1

Knowledge of the model

While GFC's model is generally understood by partners, many are unclear about the full range of available opportunities and which combinations of support would be most effective at any given time.

We recommend GFC **enhances its communication about the model's components and provides guidance to help partners make the most of these combinations**. While clearly defining the model will be a one-time task, to ensure this tailored support remains effective, GFC should assess the cost-benefit of investing time and resources in building TBR, allowing staff to better understand and respond to partner needs on an ongoing basis.

2

Additional intersectional analysis on how GFC impacts partners

While this report is focused on partner perceptions and experiences of GFC, it doesn't provide a nuanced understanding of how differently positioned partners, **particularly those working on or with lived-experience of being systems-impacted**, perceive GFC. This should be considered and investigated in future studies.

3

Additional research on activity impact and partner preferences

Given the complexity of the model, **many of its elements may be more or less effective depending on factors such as the size of the grant, the recipient's context, or even personal preference**. This makes it challenging to determine which activities should be scaled back or prioritised. We recommend **GFC conducts further research to address key strategic questions raised in our study**, including:

- **whether networking events between like-minded organisations are more effective than cohort-based approaches;**
- whether there is a shared preference **regarding the size of grants** or the timing of funding cycles to maximise impact; and
- whether GFC should focus on larger grants for fewer partners or smaller grants for a broader range of recipients.

6.5 Impact on CYPC

Through funding to partners, GFC has contributed (indirectly) to a wide range of impacts at both individual (nine areas of impact) and community/systemic levels (five areas of impact) within CYPC, with partners experiencing different impacts and with varying degrees of contribution from GFC[43].

Most CYPC impacts, with clear/strong and inferred GFC contribution, were highlighted by a high number of partners, spanning from 23 partners (for the impact most frequently referenced) to 4 partners (for the impact least frequently referenced[44]). In summary, the impact areas highlighted (and their frequency across the partners reached through the GIS) are as follows:

» At the **individual CYPC level**:
  - improved future prospects (career, education, life) for 21 partners;
  - increased self-confidence for 18 partners;
  - awareness of rights and societal issues for 12 partners;
  - leadership skills for 12 partners;
  - creation of safe spaces and sense of community for ten partners;
  - health (nutrition, mental wellbeing and physical health) for ten partners;
  - other improved skills, such as communication, public-speaking, literacy, for nine partners;
  - better emotional regulation and relationships for six partners; and
  - joy for four partners.

» At the **community/systemic CYPC level**:
  - improved access to and retention in quality education for 15 partners;
  - community-led change-making for 12 partners;
  - shifting harmful societal norms for 12 partners;
  - families and communities prioritising education for nine partners; and
  - reduced violence, particularly gender-based violence, for seven partners.

The long-term sustainability of these impacts falls outside the scope of this evaluation. However, given the extensive reach of the observed impacts at both individual and systemic levels, it is reasonable to infer that long-term change has been facilitated. Our research has identified three key limiting mechanisms which we recommend GFC improves to encourage greater impacts on CYPC:

43 GFC's contribution to impacts has been classified as either clear/strong or inferred, depending on factors outlined in Table 8.

44 While some impacts have been experienced across fewer partners, GFC's contribution to the impact among those partners was still clear/strong or inferred.

Key limiting mechanisms

1

Extensive and diverse portfolio

Despite the diversity among partners (e.g., in terms of time active, size, and geographical location) and the varying levels of support they receive from GFC (e.g., different funding sizes and durations, varying NFS, and differing levels of TBR development), the findings indicate that GFC's model has contributed to a wide range of highly valuable and shared impacts on CYPC across all partners. Whether clearly contributed to or inferred, they demonstrate GFC's model is effectively enhancing the lives of CYPC. We recommend **GFC reflects on whether these impacts align with its strategic priorities and areas of focus**, whether they correspond to the outcomes GFC aimed to achieve, and if there are **any adjustments or actions needed** to extend the anticipated duration of these impacts.

2

Using evidence to influence/advocate

Evidence from this study should support GFC in informing its advocacy and influencing efforts within the broader sector. We recommend that GFC **leverages both individual and aggregated partner and CYPC experiences to showcase how the components of its model function, advocating for other funders to adopt successful elements**. Additionally, GFC should share key learnings on areas that require further research and attention, and advocate for other funders to adopt identified strategic priorities (e.g., long-term funding). Where necessary, we recommend that GFC conducts ongoing research to explore suggested areas in greater depth, strengthening and refining its approach.

3

Using evidence to showcase partner work

Evidence of stories of change and impactful work across partners, both at the individual and aggregated levels, should be shared more widely within the sector. We recommend GFC **explores effective ways to capture and communicate partners' stories of impact, including less visible mechanisms and outcomes**.

This will not only showcase and profile the successful work of GFC's partners globally, but will also highlight the diverse mechanisms contributing to these impacts, fostering shared learning for other organisations worldwide.

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