



Global Impact Study

**Long
Summary**
August 2025

Overview, aims, and methodology of the Global Impact Study



Global Fund for Children (GFC) recently conducted a Global Impact Study (GIS) to assess its impact on partner organisations and the children and communities they serve worldwide.

The Study found that through the flexible funding, non-financial support, and trusting relationship that GFC provides partner organizations, GFC contributes to their growth and sustainability. Their strengthened capacity enables partners to create meaningful change in their communities ranging from quality education, increased local leadership, improved community wellbeing, reduced violence (especially against women and girls), and more.

Participatory approaches were at the heart of the study, from start to finish. At the outset, the methodology was co-designed together with GFC and the external research team (Ecorys) coordinating the study, collaboratively determining the Theory of Change to be tested during the research.



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The data collection involved Peer Participatory Action Research, where partner organisations in selected countries¹ were trained as co-researchers working alongside the Ecorys research team. The co-researchers (a total of 31 people from organisations in Guatemala, India, Kenya, and the UK) conducted interviews and creative research activities² about other GFC partner organisations in their country, travelling to visit them and their communities. This localised fieldwork by peers³ was complemented by online Key Informant Interviews conducted by Ecorys.

In total, the study investigated **49 GFC partner organisations from 27 countries**. The researched partners were of various organisational sizes (from nascent, small, medium, large, and extra-large), leadership types (including women-led, youth-led), and had diverse lengths of engagement with GFC (from 1 to 11 years).

The total amounts received by researched partners ranged from \$19,000–\$203,000, with an average amount of \$85,000 per partner.

A total of 243 interviews⁴ and 134 creative research exercises were conducted. All of this data was analysed using the frameworks of Contribution Analysis (CA) and Most Significant Change (MSC). CA helped assess the contribution of GFC to partners, and then their contribution to communities, across the pathways of change identified in the Theory of Change. MSC provided a way to capture a nuanced picture of impact through gathering Stories of Change (SoC) and determining the most frequently mentioned and most important stories⁵. A series of data triangulation and validation processes then took place, including interactive workshops with co-researchers to discuss the strength of contribution links as well as a validation workshop with GFC stakeholders.

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- ¹ Guatemala, India, Kenya, and the United Kingdom. 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.
 - ² These were informal, exploratory, child-friendly, and arts-based reflection activities, using photos, drawings, videos, written reflections, mind maps, and movement surveys to gather stories of change
 - ³ Other GFC partner organisations in the country, referred to as co-researchers
 - ⁴ 120 interviews were conducted with staff from GFC partner organisations and 123 interviews were conducted with community members (42 adults and 71 children and young people) that partner organisations work with/serve.
 - ⁵ MSC does not require specific research skills/software, lending itself well to participatory approaches.



Key Finding

GFC's impact on children, young people, and communities

Drawing on deep dive case studies across 24 communities⁶ — including 123 interviews and 86 creative research activities — the following findings emerged.

Please note that these findings are indirectly linked to GFC, as GFC's support enables partner organisations to deliver activities that contribute to these outcomes in communities.

Community level impacts

In terms of impacts at a broader systemic or community level, a significant number of children, young people, and adults spoke about **improved access to quality education and being supported to stay in education**, including for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

 15 partners communities

Many organisations succeeded in **shifting attitudes around certain harmful cultural practices (Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage) and limiting attitudes towards women**.

 12 partners communities

Many achieved this through community mobilisation and community-led efforts, and specialised workshops on gender roles and equality.

There was a strong theme globally of **communities taking ownership of tackling systemic issues**.

 12 partners communities

In many cases, community change-making was ignited through an individual that got inspired by taking part in a partner organisation's activities.

A common shift mentioned by communities is how they have started **to prioritise and get more involved with the education of their children**.

 9 partners communities

For example, through parent counseling and parent education sessions, parents themselves gained awareness in how to best support their children's education and health.

Lastly, deeply connected to the work in addressing harmful attitudes and cultural norms, many communities experienced a **reduction in violence** (particularly gender-based violence).

 7 partners communities

This was linked to rights awareness and knowing what to do when spotting harmful behaviour, as well as through the dedicated protection work carried out by partner organisations.

⁶ We researched the communities where 24 partners carry out their work, across Guatemala, Kenya, India, and the United Kingdom.



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Individual level impacts

Numerous young people, and their parents, shared stories about how they have **improved prospects or careers** due to working with GFC's partners.

 **21 partners communities**

It was frequently mentioned that community members, especially young people, developed their **confidence** through their involvement with GFC's partners, becoming less shy, "coming out of my shell", being able to speak to new people, and developing self-esteem and self-belief.

 **18 partners communities**

Many community members expressed that they gained **an increased awareness of their rights or of important societal topics** that impact their communities.

 **13 partners communities**

Many young people expressed that they developed **leadership skills**, as organisations provided them with responsibilities and platforms for decision-making.

 **12 partners communities**

Many also spoke about partner organisations creating a **safe, judgement-free, and inclusive space** for them.

 **10 partners communities**

There were also stories of improved **physical and mental health** as a result of better nutrition, sports, feeling supported, cared for, and safe, and building friendships.

 **10 partners communities**

Children and young people also mentioned other improved skills such as **public-speaking skills, facilitation skills, reading and writing skills, independence**, etc.

 **9 partners communities**

It was expressed that participating in partner activities helped children (especially boys) **regulate emotions, calm down, and therefore have better relationships** at home.

 **6 partners communities**

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 communities**



Key Finding

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.

Many partners described GFC as an **extension of their own organisation**, as colleagues in partnership tackling problems together.

 19 partners; 39%⁷ of researched partners

Almost all partners mentioned that the trusting relationship helped them **make their own decisions around their own priorities, determining the vision of their own organisation**.

 42 partners; 86% of researched partners

This was a particularly strong finding among nascent, small, and medium-sized organisations⁸ which were women and youth-led.

Experiencing a trusting and supportive relationship provided partners with **confidence and security**, which helped them focus on developing their organisations.

 18 partners; 37% of researched partners

Four leaders of organisations where GFC started supporting them when they were at an early stage, with no systems set up, emphasized how transformative their relationship with GFC had been. For some large and extra-large organisations, 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 funders.



⁷ In this qualitative-driven study, findings are not representative across all of GFC's partners. The number of partners relates to the number of researched partners who referenced a finding. Percentages indicate the proportion of the total number of researched partners (49) who referenced the finding.

⁸ Nascent organisations were determined as having a budget of up to \$5,000 USD at the point when they were first funded by GFC; Small organisations as \$5–20,000 USD; Medium organisations as \$20–100,000 USD; Large organisations as \$100–500,000 USD; and Extra-large organisations as having over \$500,000 USD at the point of first funding from GFC.



Experiencing a trusting relationship with GFC encouraged partners' leaders to **model the trusting dynamic with their own staff members** and shifted towards more trust-based collaborative ways of working with their communities.

 **9 partners; 18% of researched partners**

Partners also expressed that their close relationship with GFC **positively affected their wellbeing**.

 **9 partners; 18% of researched partners**

Through 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.

For a few partners, there were occasional lapses in trust due to **miscommunications or misunderstandings** around decision-making or selection processes.

 **6 partners; 12% of researched partners**

In terms of what strengthened and makes the trusting relationship work, the following factors emerged:

» **GFC's caring staff that respect the expertise of partners**

 **17 partners; 35%**

» **the accessibility and swift responsiveness of GFC staff**

 **17 partners; 35%**

» **in-person visits by GFC staff**

 **15 partners; 31%**

» **GFC's patience and flexibility**

 **12 partners; 24%**

» **open, safe, and non-judgmental communication**

 **10 partners; 20%**

» **trusting partners with unrestricted funding and light monitoring approaches**

 **9 partners; 18%**

» **values alignment between GFC and partners**

 **5 partners; 10%**



Key Finding

GFC's funding approach

Almost all partners directly mentioned how GFC's flexible funding and light monitoring approach had 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 flexible funding allowed partners to **listen and respond to community needs** ("be needs-based" and community-led).

 **30 partners; 61% of researched partners**

The flexible funding also allowed partners to **invest and improve internal processes of the organisation** by training staff, purchasing equipment, or hiring consultants/specialised staff.

 **25 partners; 51% of researched partners**

For many organisations, the funding helped them pause and think about how they can improve their work. The flexible funding was also **crucial in sustaining the organisation's activities**.

 **16 partners; 33% of researched partners**

This was an especially strong finding for unregistered or small organisations, especially those that were women- or youth-led. While the funding amounts were not generally large, **they came at critical times for many partners, enabling them to survive**.



The flexible funding allowed many partners to **expand their services and increase capacity**, opening their doors to more people, and increasing the number, frequency, and length of activities.

 **16 partners; 33% of researched partners**

The flexible funding provided partners the ability to **adapt to challenges, crises, or changing circumstances**.

 **14 partners; 29% of researched partners**

It also **improved motivation, wellbeing, and confidence for staff**, as funding was used to provide timely and adequate compensation.

 **12 partners; 24% of researched partners**

The flexible funding allowed partners to **carry out holistic and long-term (uninterrupted) work with children, young people, and communities**, "filling in the gaps" of what other, more rigid, funding did not cover.

 **12 partners; 24% of researched partners**

A few partners also mentioned that the flexibility allowed partners to take **risks, experiment, make mistakes**, and learn in ways they cannot do with stringent bureaucratic funders.

 **6 partners; 12% of researched partners**

In partner's stories, the mechanisms of what supports these impacts were revealed to be:

- » **the flexibility of funding and the unrestricted nature of the funding**

 33 partners; 67%

- » **the light monitoring requirements, limited paperwork, and limited formal expense reporting**, especially as this approach freed up staff capacity for project work and enabled quick reactions in response to emerging needs

 21 partners; 43%

- » the **timely disbursement of funds**

 3 partners; 6%

There were some critiques of GFC's funding approach:

- » many partners highlighted that the **funding period was too short⁹**

 12 partners; 24%

- » many partners highlighted there was **a lack of clarity or communication on** how long the funding would last

 9 partners; 18%

- » a few organisations shared concerns that **the funding amount was too little**

 4 partners; 8%

⁹ This was reported across various organisational sizes, who received funding over a broad range of funding periods (2–5 years)





Key Finding

GFC's non-financial support

There was a strong and widespread sense that GFC's non-financial support (NFS) services positively 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 Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by the Americas and Asia, with less of an impact in Europe & Eurasia. 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.

There was widespread evidence that **partners got inspired and learned a lot from networking opportunities provided by GFC.**

 **33 partners; 67% of researched partners**

Through networking connections, partners established peer networks among themselves that they could call upon for general support and share opportunities.

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

 **28 partners; 57% of researched partners**

GFC helped identify organisational strengths and weaknesses, which was followed by relevant tailored support, mentoring, and training workshops.





Also, **GFC supported partners' visibility, recognition, and access to further funding** by providing connections to other funders, offering advice on applications, etc.

 **28 partners; 57% of researched partners**

This was felt strongly by women-led and youth-led partners.

It also emerged that GFC supported organisations to develop **robust, effective, and relevant safeguarding practices**, resulting in improved policies, attitudes towards care, transparency and communication, and better child protection.

 **24 partners; 49% of researched partners**

Moreover, GFC supported **shifts in attitudes towards power**.

 **23 partners; 47% of researched partners**

For example, there were mindset shifts in the ways organisations related to their own staff, service-users, and communities as a result of specific trainings provided by GFC.

Some partners expressed transformed **mindsets towards donors**, whereby previously they had seen donors as untouchable, or saviours.

 **8 partners; 16% of researched partners**

GFC's training supported staff to improve their skills (fundraising skills, facilitation skills, communication skills, social media skills, etc.).

 **20 partners; 41% of researched partners**

Partners told stories of **GFC's impact on their personal and organisational wellbeing**, as they began to prioritise staff mental health, improving morale and communication amongst staff, enabling them to work better with communities.

 **16 partners; 33% of researched partners**

Improvements to partner's **Learning & Evaluation** was less widespread than other impacts, although there were examples of how L&E support helped partners to assess and therefore improve the quality of programmes, providing greater accountability to communities.

 **10 partners; 20% of researched partners**

In terms of critiques of GFC's non-financial support, partners felt that:

- » exchanges and group workshops with other partners were **not always relevant or tailored** to their organisations

 **5 partners; 10%**

- » they could benefit more **if GFC communicated more clearly** about the support available and how it aligns to organisational specific needs

 **5 partners; 10%**

- » how it felt that the support was **not consistently offered** to all partners

 **5 partners; 10%**



Key Finding

Overall impact of GFC on partners

The research found that 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. These elements work together to create impacts for partners.

In terms of how all the elements of support combine to create the most significant impacts; many partners told stories of:

- » how GFC had supported them to **learn, grow in size and skills, and improve as an organisation**



34 partners; 69%

- » how GFC supported the **sustainability of their organisations** (in the short and long-term)



33 partners; 67%

- » how they **gained confidence and motivation**



28 partners; 57%

- » how they experienced **transformational shifts in their approaches (becoming more egalitarian and participatory)**



19 partners; 39%

Larger funding amounts proved to have the greatest effect on partner growth and confidence, regardless of whether they are provided over short or long periods. **When large amounts were combined with longer funding periods**, this enhanced long-term sustainability (strengthening internal systems, establishing self-sustaining community structures, strengthened networks, etc.) and a greater capacity to foster community-led, needs-based, participatory change.







Recommendations

GFC should continue to:

- » Hire staff in line with their existing recruitment approach (aligned with GFC values, genuinely care for and respect partners' expertise)
- » Prioritise and provide sufficient time for GFC staff to build meaningful relationships with partners.
- » Have light-touch monitoring requirements for partners
- » Provide flexible funding
- » Provide timely disbursement of funds, including additional emergency disbursements to partners when needed



- » Select and scout partners according to their existing selection approach (as it effectively identifies organisations that are deeply embedded in communities)
- » Tailor training workshops to partner needs, ensuring they are interactive and engaging.
- » Have an approach to non-financial support that is flexible around attendance, open to wider partner organisation staff (beyond only leaders), and models practices (e.g., wellbeing) that aligns with GFC
- » Offer its model (trusting close relationships, flexible funding, non-financial support) as a comprehensive package, reinforcing the value of utilising various elements separately or together as needed

GFC should consider:

- » Further prioritising in-person visits from GFC staff to partner organisations (as online sessions do not produce the same relationship-building effects)
- » More proactively giving tailored, transparent and informal guidance to partners (explaining how GFC makes decisions, providing information about the wider funding context, insights on partner performance, etc.).
- » Extending funding periods and prioritising long-term funding where possible
- » Increasing funding amounts (tailored to each partner)
- » Providing more support to help partners seek new and other funding (especially for partners with shorter-term grants)
- » Better communicating about the full range of non-financial support services, providing consistent and ongoing updates to all partners
- » Prioritising expertise-specific sessions and avoiding generic sessions at partner convenings
- » Enhancing communication about the components of GFC's support and helping partners make the most of these combinations
- » Conducting further research to address key questions raised in the 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.
- » Conducting additional intersectional analysis on how GFC impacts and is perceived by differently positioned partners
- » Reflecting on whether the impacts found at community level align with GFC's strategic priorities and if there are any adjustments needed
- » Exploring effective ways to communicate and showcase partners' stories of impact
- » Leveraging the findings of this report to showcase how the components of GFC's model function, advocating for other funders to adopt successful elements



