global fund for children

Spark Fund in Southeast Asia

Advancing Youth-led Climate Action in Vietnam and Thailand

Investing in the Next Generation of Climate Leaders in Southeast Asia

In 2023, Global Fund for Children (GFC) launched the Spark Fund in Southeast Asia with a specific focus on **climate justice** in **Thailand and Vietnam**—two countries facing urgent environmental threats and systemic barriers to youth participation in funding and decision-making.

Why Thailand and Vietnam?

Both countries face disproportionate impacts from the climate crisis -- rising sea levels, urban flooding, biodiversity loss, and air pollution. Yet youth and grassroots groups struggle to access funding and face regulatory or structural challenges. The Spark Fund addresses this by providing:

- **Direct, unrestricted financial support.**
- **Youth-led governance and decision-making.**
- **Localized capacity development and mentorship.**
- **Adaptive and context-specific funding approaches.**

Catalytic Impacts of Phase I

➢ Shifting Power to Youth Through Participatory Grantmaking

- 15 youth panellists (ages 18-29) designed and led a grantmaking process from criteria to grant decisions -- a radical shift from traditional top-down models.
- These youth panellists gained new skills in facilitation, negotiation, and decision-making, with evaluations showing a marked increase in leadership.

➢ Reaching Underserved and Marginalized Youth

- Due to restrictive civil society laws in Vietnam, Spark Fund pivoted to a Fellowship model to directly fund 10 Vietnamese fellows from rural, low-income, and traditionally underserved communities.
- Spark Fund supported young people and organizations that are unable to access traditional sources of funding, unlocking capital for under-resourced groups, including Indigenous people.

➢ Flexible Funding to Unlock Local Innovation

- In Thailand, 6 youth-led organizations received unrestricted, two-year grants, allowing them to:
  - Launch climate education & advocacy programs
  - Pilot sustainable tourism and resilience projects
  - Develop community-specific climate solutions (e.g., flood warning systems)
- In Vietnam, 10 fellows received unrestricted, two-year grants, allowing them to:
  - Engage in leadership training opportunities
  - Experiment with new technologies, including weather-independent production methods
  - Launch a forest gardening nursery, agricultural cooperative, and paper production company

➢ Building Community and Regional Solidarity

- Regional convenings in Chiang Mai (2024) and Rayong (2025) brought together Thai partners and Vietnamese fellows to build networks, share learnings, and gain new skills and knowledge.
- These convenings fostered a regional youth-led climate action ecosystem--connecting peers across borders and forming the foundation for sustainable collaboration and climate solutions.

➢ Capacity Strengthening Beyond the Grant

- GFC provided tailored technical assistance and capacity development workshops, covering:
  - Communications, storytelling, and fundraising
  - Financial management and budgeting
  - Safeguarding and child protection
- Partners reported increased confidence, new capabilities, and stronger organizational resilience.

➢ Advancing Language and Cultural Justice

- All youth engagement was conducted in English, Thai, and Vietnamese, reinforcing inclusive communication and building trust.
- GFC coordinators embedded in-country used culturally specific outreach strategies, improving accessibility and representation.

➢ Strengthening Regional Philanthropy

- By engaging Asia-based funders, Spark Fund promotes a shift away from Global North-centric funding. This helped catalyze more equitable funding flows.

"GFC made us feel that we could rely on them at any time; we feel supported, and it is important for us."

– Spark Fund Partner, Thailand

Features of the Spark Fund in Southeast Asia	
Youth-led approach	The Fund is designed and implemented by a panel of young people from Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore.
Climate justice focus	Spark Fund partners and fellows are working to address climate change impacts and promote community-level climate resilience and adaptation.
Language justice	The Fund centers language accessibility for broad and diverse participation.
Capacity development	Professional development and leadership opportunities are provided to young climate leaders.
Community-driven solutions	The youth panelists select and award grants to organizations and young climate leaders embedded in the communities they serve.
Co-Funding Model	The co-funding model amplifies impact by fostering collaboration among donors committed to youth-led climate solutions in Asia.

Phase II: Vision for Scale

GFC is seeking $1 million over two years to:

- **Sustain flexible funding** for the current cohort of 6 partners and 10 fellows in Thailand and Vietnam.
- **Provide advanced capacity support** tailored to organizational needs and maturity.
- **Support storytelling and visibility** to elevate youth voices in climate discourse and decision-making.
- **Strengthen regional connectivity** through convenings and peer-to-peer learning.
- **Build long-term resilience** for youth-led movements through mentorship collaboration.

The next phase will reinforce the Spark Fund's success in creating safe, inclusive, and impactful pathways for youth leadership in climate justice. With additional resources, the Spark Fund has the potential to scale widely and build a regional network of young climate leaders.

Join Us

We invite Asia-based philanthropists, foundations, corporate donors, and CSR partners to co-invest in a proven, scalable model of youth empowerment in climate action. Together, we can:

- **Elevate the voices of young climate leaders.**
- **Accelerate community-driven climate solutions.**
- **Build a stronger, more inclusive regional philanthropic ecosystem.**

Investing in the Spark Fund offers donors a powerful opportunity to support **locally grounded, youth-led climate action** in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions. This model ensures that resources reach the most proximate and underfunded changemakers, and builds lasting infrastructure for **youth leadership, regional collaboration, and community resilience**. By backing a proven, participatory approach, donors help shift power to young people and unlock innovative, scalable solutions—all while contributing to a more **equitable and sustainable philanthropic ecosystem in Asia**.

Global Fund for Children

Washington, DC, United States
+1 202.331.9003
info@globalfundforchildren.org

Global Fund for Children UK Trust

London, United Kingdom
+44 2081 642428
uktrust@globalfundforchildren.org

globalfundforchildren.org