

**YOUNG FEMINIST MOVEMENT BUILDING  
IN EAST AFRICA: A STUDY ON THE WORK  
OF YOUNG FEMINISTS IN KENYA,  
TANZANIA, AND UGANDA**

**Prepared for Ford Foundation**

**Through the collaboration of Akili Dada (Kenya), Msichana Initiative (Tanzania),  
and MEMPROW (Uganda)**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community-Based Organisation
COVID - 19	CoronaVirus Disease
CREAW	Centre for Rights Education and Awareness
FEMNET	The African Women's Development and Communication Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
KEFEADO	Kenya Female Advisory Organisation
KELIN	Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
KNHCR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
KWIECO	Kilimanjaro Women Information Exchange and Consultancy Organisation
LANDESA	Landesa Rural Development Institute
LBTQ	Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans Women and Queer
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MEMPROW	The Mentoring and Empowering Programme for Young Women
MWAMAKIBA	Mtandao wa Mashirika Yasiyo Ya Kiserikali Bagamoyo (Non-Governmental Organisation in Bagamoyo)
NACONGO	National Council of NGOs, Tanzania
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
PREP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis

SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SHOFCO	Shining Hope for Communities
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
TEN/MET	Tanzania Education Network / Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WETEC	Western Twaweza Empowerment Campaign
WFT	Women Fund Tanzania Trust
WROs	Women's Rights Organisations
YF	Young Feminist
YFMs	Young Feminist Movement
YFO	Young Feminist Organisation
YFS	Young Feminist Study

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young feminists are building critique and activism frameworks that offer a proactive understanding of how to imagine, design, and develop emancipatory narratives, technologies, spaces, practices,, and digital cultures that undermine misogynist, racist, gender binarial, and heteropatriarchal societal norms in the post-pandemic world. Young feminist movements, regionally and globally, have enormous potential to question and shift norms and build global alliances. While the tools for mobilization, forms of activism, and the spaces for change (within institutions or outside; in global, regional, or national institutions; or within grassroots communities; or autonomously as activists) may differ across regions, the commitment to upholding constitutional and democratic principles through forms of collective action is very much the same among young feminists globally.

For young feminists in Africa, the focus of their activism is wide-ranging, going from tackling widespread issues such as climate change, access to education and economic opportunities, and poverty alleviation to more niche matters that are specific to their local communities, such as the persistent problem of female genital mutilation. In their work, these fierce warriors push the envelope and demand more of their communities: more progress, more breaking of barriers, and more equal opportunities that accelerate personal and communal growth.

However, the young feminists themselves, in order to thrive and succeed at their work, cannot work in isolation. They require various forms of support, which broadly may take the form of financial, emotional, or social assistance. Unfortunately, these forms of support are sometimes hard to come by, as young feminists are shunned and even ostracised for their progressive work or because they do not have sufficient access to the primary resources that will enable them to gain help from far and wide, or even because conversations around support are not being had. So these young feminists remain unaware of the potential opportunities available to them. As a result, the feminist work they are doing slows down or halts; they become burnt out, run out of resources, and feel isolated; they may even give up their noble fight due to a lack of sufficient support.

This report looks into the work that young feminists in three East African countries, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, have undertaken and the support they receive. However, the purpose of this report is to gain a critical understanding of how best, and in what other ways, young feminists can be supported and resourced to effectively engage in their work and carry out their mandates. As a consequence, the report will extensively analyse the various ways in which support for young feminists is failing, as well as provide contextual analysis on why the feminist space in East Africa exists as it currently does, and then finally propose solutions for all-encompassing assistance and support, to advance the movement in the region.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Young feminists have played a significant role in bringing up issues of injustice all around the world. Young women and girls have always been outspoken and taken an intersectional approach to fighting inequality, realising how these issues are connected, whether it be in their local surroundings or global issues. The historical legacies of colonialism, race, caste, class, ableism, and gender are still prominent depending on the setting for young women and girls living in the Global South.

Young women and girls continue to challenge these marginalising issues, yet across these regions, movements and institutions led by young women are unseen, facing immense backlash from conservative forces despite limited resources to support them. While there are a few regional funds for women and youth-led movements in the Latin American context, there is a need for a more intentional focus on supporting young feminists to further mobilise young women to seek power and raise their voices in critical decision-making spaces. In the African and South Asian contexts, the infrastructure is absent, and the need for resourcing civil society stakeholders (grassroots movements, activists, influencers, women's collectives, artists) is acute and urgent. In order to ensure that these movements thrive and that the voices of young feminists in the Global South are amplified, there is a distinct need to resource the local/regional infrastructure, which is currently starved.

Based on the aforementioned, Ford Foundation worked closely with young feminists in East Africa to identify funding and support dynamics of these young feminists and the organisations and initiatives that they have begun. This collaboration included Msichana Initiative (Tanzania), Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women-MEMPROW (Uganda), and Akili Dada (Kenya). The three organisations, in partnership with Ford, adopted a unique model to the research project, with the purpose of including as many young women as possible in the process, as well as providing them with much needed guidance from senior feminist researchers so as to grow their skillsets and ensure that excellent work was produced. Within each country, the young feminist researchers reported to a lead researcher, and all three country teams together had a mentor at their disposal

whom they utilised as a sounding board throughout the process. As well, in order to better understand how young feminists organize and to persuade funders to enhance the mobilization of flexible resources for young feminists, this work was conducted through movement-driven research.

This study was specifically conducted to enable deep listening into current movements and to do an early evaluation mapping phase to comprehend:

- Which local or regional women's funds have the potential to intensify their work reaching young feminists, including for hard-to-reach populations;
- Whether there are emerging funds that need to be created at a more regional and local level.
- What young feminists in the regions are looking for in terms of support (financial, social, mental);
- Which local or regional women's funds have the potential to deepen their work, thereby reaching young feminists, including those in rural or secluded areas;
- How to create philanthropic and solidarity cultures inside economies to sustain action beyond sporadic grants by decentralizing financial streams to provide accessibility to young feminists.

The research addressed the following questions in order to fully address the aforementioned goals: -

- Who/what comprises young feminists/young feminist movements?
- What topics do young feminist activists organize around?
- How are young feminists uniting around problems that are important to them, and how do they get over geographical, racial, social, and other hurdles to unite (such as rural vs. urban placement, language, disability, etc)?



- How are the movements of young feminism financed, socialized, and emotionally supported?
- Where are the ports of access or opportunities where we can help young feminists more?

The three anchor organisations opted to include young feminists themselves in the research, so they contracted five local young feminists in each country to do the bulk of the work, guided by more experienced local feminists and supported by a mentor as well as the anchor organisations themselves. In this way, the project not only had local ownership but was owned by the young women themselves, speaking amongst each other candidly in order to fully understand the areas of lack without the imposition of power dynamics that often impedes open dialogue.

Another approach that was taken was to ensure that, for the purposes of making the research as precise as possible, parameters would be set in the meaning and understanding of the phrase “young feminist,” as proposed by Ford Foundation. At a convening that involved the anchor organisations, the research facilitators, and the young women researchers themselves, it was unanimously agreed that the below working definition of young feminists would be adopted going forward:

*“All young women aged 18 to 35 in their diversity who work to advance the interests of girls and women within their communities.”*

The reason behind the arrival of this definition was to restrict the age range of the young feminists to those who were adults (so as to ensure that those young women interviewed were legally able to work) whilst still being within the parameters of youth prescribed by the East African States. At the same time, the definition needed to provide a broad understanding of womanhood that would include variations in background, gender, sexuality, economic status, able-bodiedness, and indeed any other means of identification that the young women utilised for themselves.

Based on these parameters, extensive research was conducted in each of the three countries in order to fully understand where the weaknesses and strengths of young feminist organising in the region lie, so far as support is concerned. Below are the research project's findings, broadly collated to represent the East African region as a whole, as well as an analysis of what was discovered on the ground, and recommendations for improvement.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

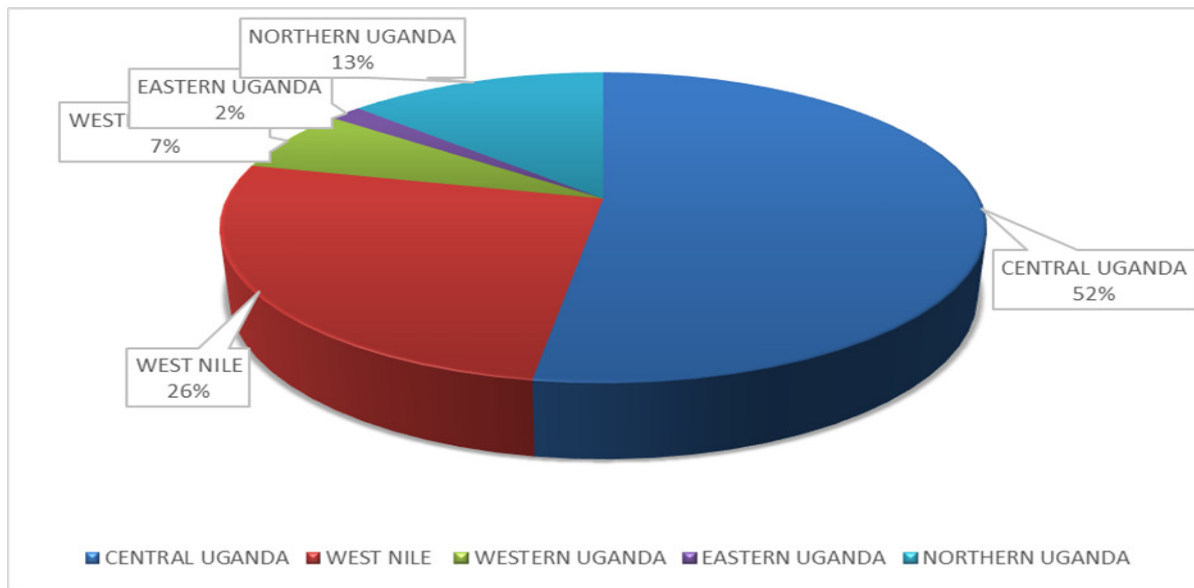
### **2.1 Sampling Techniques and Data Collection Methods**

The research used purposive sampling to identify young organisations or individual activists that self-identified as feminists in the work that they do, if not using the word itself.<sup>1</sup> All participants were between 18 and 35 years old, acting as founders of organisations, playing a critical leadership role in their organisation, or acting as independent activists. To achieve this sampling, the researchers created a list of feminist organizations and individuals from those known to them and those in the databases of their respective anchor organisations. They then used the snowballing technique to gain access to smaller and harder-to-reach organisations or activists. Within this criteria, effort was made to maximise the intersectionality of young feminists to capture a diverse range of experiences based on issues handled, sexuality, age, and geographical location (rural, urban and peri-urban).

In Uganda, the research covered 43 participants in FGDs and 18 participants in KIIs, in the below regional distribution.

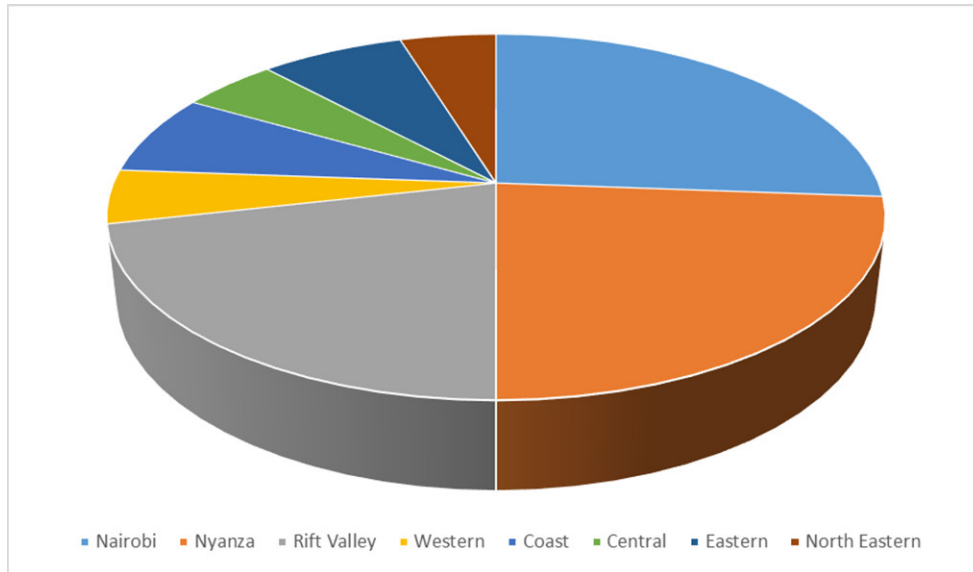
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<sup>1</sup> As has been noted in the Findings section, there was quite a bit of reticence amongst some of the young women organisers in using the word “feminist” to identify themselves, due to the negative connotations placed on the word, as well as the negative light that they perceived their work would be painted in should they choose to use the word to identify themselves and their work. A poor understanding of feminist history and principles was another reason for rejecting the identifier. Regardless, the work being done by these young women was feminist, and that is what the research focused on.



In the case of Tanzania, primary data was collected through both KIIs and FGDs. 54 out of 74 planned key informant interviews were undertaken across all regions in Tanzania's Mainland. The team first identified 25 young feminist organizations from their own network. Snowballing sampling was then used to obtain the names and contact of other young feminist leaders across the country. A total of 37 more young feminist organisers were reached through five focus group discussions conducted in Shinyanga, Singida, Pwani, Mtwara, and Manyara regions, thanks to additional funding provided by Ford Foundation. These regions were selected given their remoteness and the challenges posed by technological inaccessibility to interview them or hold the FGDs virtually.

In Kenya, 42 key informant interviews were conducted in the below regional distributions, with careful consideration being once again taken to ensure that all regions of the country were represented.



## **2.2 Design**

This research is guided by a qualitative phenomenological study approach. Qualitative approaches are used to encourage and harness the voices of young feminists as well as reduce power dynamics between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 2013). The use of phenomenology is due to the ability it has to bring forward individual experiences and taken-for-granted assumptions like those of YFMs.

Data collected was reviewed through thematic analysis, and deductive findings were made. The research was descriptive based on primary data.

## **2.3 Survey Instruments**

The research used an essential in-depth interview questionnaire and a focus group discussion guide, as well as sending out official invitation letters from the anchor organisations in order to provide legitimacy to the project. In addition, it provided information from respondents around feminist organizing around a core set of questions and data on the dates when interviews were carried out.

## **2.4 Ethical Consent**

The research tools incorporated a consent clause. All participants provided verbal or written consent, including the permission to record data and use the information obtained with no implications whatsoever for their current or future relationship with the implementing organisation. Prior, to this, participants were provided with organizational details, feminist values guiding the research, and details of the research, including how data was to be used. In the course of the compilation of the report, no forms of identification were used, such as names or organisations unless explicitly allowed by the persons or organisations themselves.

## **2.5 Analysis of Data**

The overall approach to data analysis was thematic and complemented by the use of comparative methods as described by Glaser and Strauss (2021). Three team meetings with young feminist researchers were held at the end of data collection exercise, and emerging codes and themes were discussed. The completed interviews were transcribed verbatim by the young feminists through the reading of all scripts and evaluative annotation. Codes were collectively developed by the team and further refined in order to develop a model to explain integral parts of the state of young feminist organizing in the East African region.

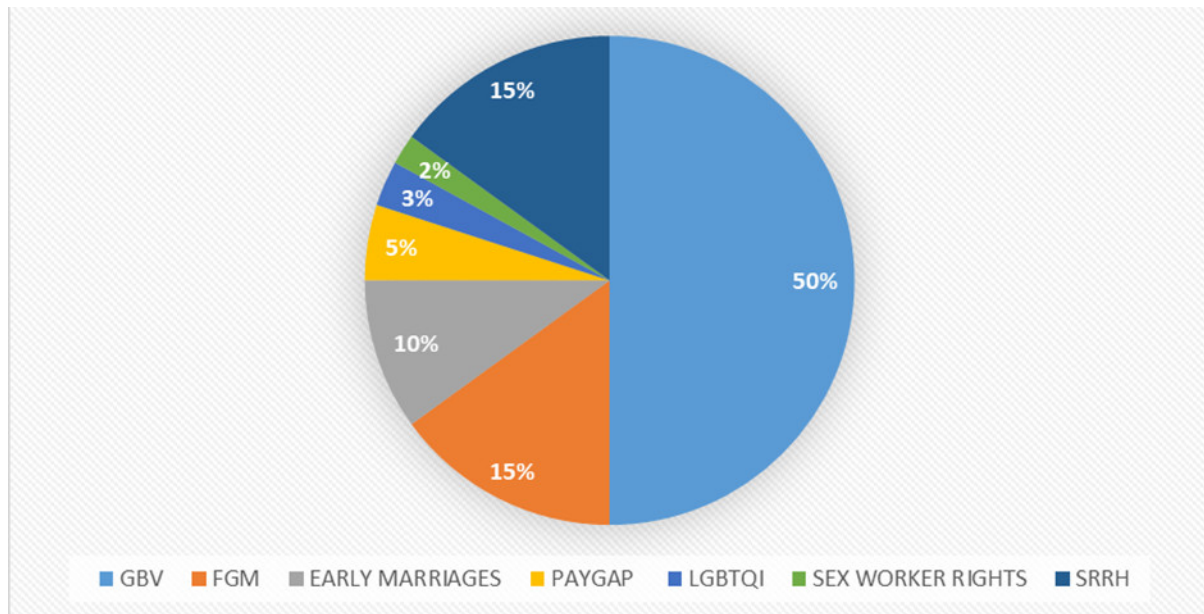
### **3. FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 AREAS THAT YOUNG FEMINISTS ARE ORGANISING AROUND**

While the sample size selected for this research shows that feminists hail from various socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures with different lived experiences, many are organizing under similar issues that align with feminist ideologies. However, the challenges faced by young feminists are sometimes unique to their regional location. For instance, urban feminists are more likely to deal with problems such as cyberbullying, whilst feminists in rural areas may grapple more with clashing with their local customs and cultures.

In Kenya, the top trending issues that young feminist organizations are organizing under are gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, sexual and reproductive health rights, and childhood marriages. As a result, the spotlight on sex workers' rights, the gender pay gap, and women's economic empowerment has dimmed as they are no longer viewed as a priority among YFOs. In pointing this out, it is worth keeping in mind that these broad categorisations follow the categories created by

donors, requiring a collapsing of the work that the YFs do. Often, YFOs are dealing with cross-cutting issues at the same time and do not put themselves into strict boxes. The donor space and donor language, however puts the YFOs in a position where they have to define themselves in specific ways in order to gain attention and funding. This will be discussed further in the Analysis section.



Other issues that Kenyan YFOs organize around include the following.

### **Access to education, training, and employment**

Education, training, and employment opportunities remain critical issues in arid and semi-arid lands. With this in mind, organisations such as the Samburu Empowerment Network run school mentorship programs to encourage girls not to drop out. “In our community, the transition rates from basic level education to high school have been quite low over the years. As a result, we curated a program dubbed Reaching Out Young Minds to engage with girls on the importance of access to education and what it means for their future,” says Joseph Leajore, Director of Samburu Empowerment Network. The organisation also supports its partner schools with books to encourage reading and literacy.

Over in Narok County, girls and young women often give up on pursuing higher levels of education when they fail to get the desired grades in high school, leading them to quit school and stay at home. To address this, Diana Naiyanoi, founded



Nailepu Girls. “It’s important to teach girls that there is more to education than grades. In most cases, when they fail to get the desired grades in high school to transition to university, they tend to see it as the end of the road, and that's not true,” she says.

### **Disability rights**

According to the 2019 Kenyan Census, 2.9% of Kenyans living with disabilities are women, and 1.9% are men. Additionally, the Ministry of Education states that out of 750,000 school-age children with disabilities, only 6% are in school. Over the years, Kenyan women living with disabilities have faced issues such as access to health care, education, and employment opportunities. Shame, stigmatization, and, recently Covid-19 has also contributed significantly to the challenges women living with disabilities face.

To address these issues and allow women with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights, Mercy Mugure founded Ability Africa-Meru County, Kenya. “Women living with disabilities are not any different from any of us. They also have the right to have access to health care, education, and employment opportunities, and yet, that is not the case, especially here in Meru County,” she says.

### **Community sensitization**

Creating awareness is critical in curbing many social challenges women face, such as women's right to education, and many YFOs have taken up this role. “We work with the community to educate on harmful societal/cultural practices that affect girls and young women. We also highlight the importance of human rights for women in society. We also work around educating girls in society,” says Essy Atieno, the communication officer at Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO). KEFEADO, as a YFO, exists to promote gender equity, equal opportunities, and human rights for all with a focus on engaging and questioning

cultural beliefs and practices toward building rights-based cultures, as well as building girls, female youth, and women's leadership.

### **Mentorship and leadership initiatives**

Most informal communities lack the presence of women in leadership positions, making it hard for girls living in these communities to access social networks that act as mentorship and leadership incubation hubs. Located in Dandora, an informal community in Nairobi county, Fortress hope of Africa, a female-led YFO, is keen on bridging this gap through one of its Girls Leadership Institute programs. The project was inspired and developed after they engaged in one of Akili Dada's mentorship programs, the East African young women leadership and mentorship initiative.

Mercy Mwende, the programs officer, shares how the program runs: "The project comprises 10 girls whom my colleagues and I directly mentor on leadership, advocacy, and feminism. In turn, the girls run peer-to-peer education in secondary schools within Dandora and Kayole where they recruit up to 50 girls from each school," says Mercy.

She adds that they also empower the girls to form school clubs dubbed My Voice Club, where they can engage in feminism, advocacy, and transformative leadership while acting as a safe space for the girls.

### **Economic justice for women**

Investing in women's economic justice sets a direct path toward gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Women contribute enormously to economies but remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. Western Twaweza Empowerment Campaign (WETEC) is a YFO based in western Kenya whose primary goal is to create lifetime opportunities for vulnerable adolescent girls in Kenya. Additionally, WETEC also economically empowers girls and teenage mothers by bringing them together to learn how to make and sell handbags as a source of income.

### **Psychosocial and mental support for women and girls**

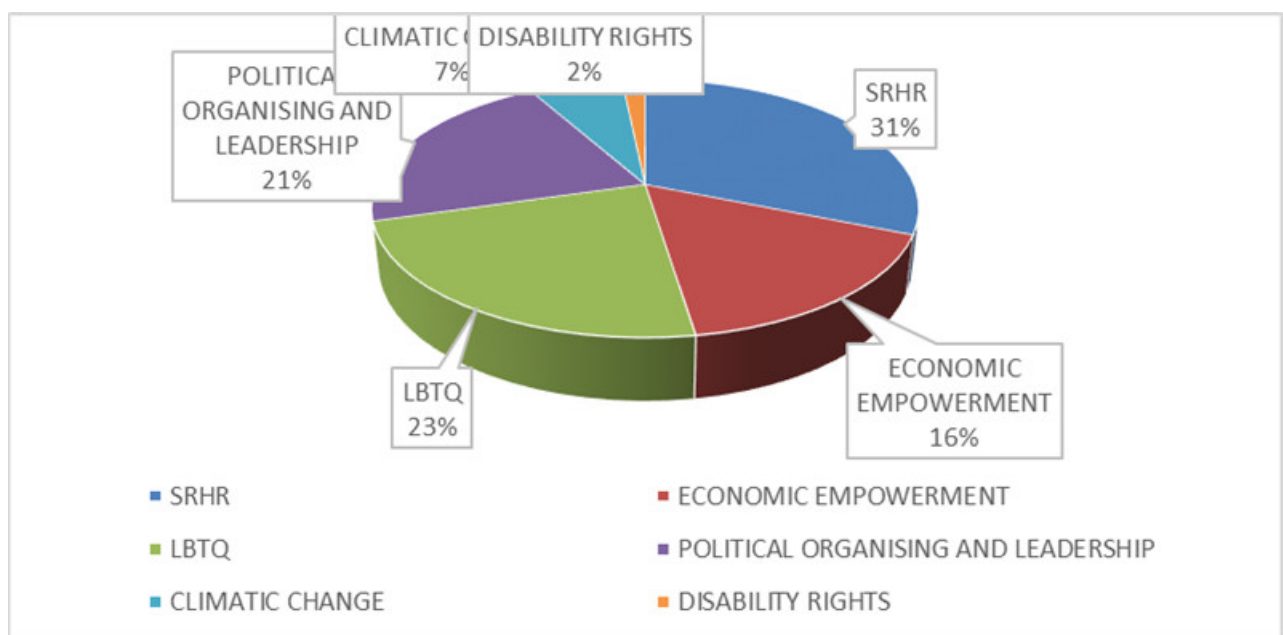
Many YFOs organise under issues against the violation of women and girls' rights through offering psychosocial support for victims and survivors of GBV and other rights violations. In Kibra, an informal settlement located in the heart of Nairobi, organisations such as Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) do their best to provide this support. They run a project on psychosocial and mental support, and they also have an in-house counselor that offers psychosocial support for the survivors of all forms of GBV.

In Tanzania, by and large, respondents referred to women's and girls' rights as the main areas that organisations are working on and coalitions organising around. Virtually all the respondents interviewed mentioned SGBV, economic justice for youth and women, SRHR including menstrual health, and the right to education for girls as key areas of organising. Some of the thematic areas that YFOs are working around in Tanzania are specific to the socioeconomic and cultural context of the particular area that they are based. For example, organisations and activists in Manyara are working on pastoralist land rights and on Hadzabe culture and traditions. FGM was also distinct to those areas that have higher rates of the practice, such as Manyara and Singida.

A number of relevant and interesting areas were raised by individual respondents as being areas they were organising around, but these were not common across different organisations or geographical areas. One respondent spoke about their work in environmental and climate justice, and another respondent about their passion for the rights and well-being of women farmers. Mental health was mentioned by a third respondent, and human trafficking by a fourth. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) mentorship & coaching was another unique focus area that was brought up. At least three respondents spoke about their work on the rights of domestic workers. This included advocating for the rights of domestic workers, lobbying for the amendment of discriminatory legal frameworks

such as the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, and raising awareness to domestic workers to know their rights and own their voice.

In Uganda, young feminists once again have significant reach and cover similar areas of organising as the rest of East Africa, across an intersection of issues such as sexual reproductive health and rights, economic justice, technology access, disability rights, leadership and politics, environment and climatic change, politics, LGBT, sex work, peace and justice, and education access. Once again, the top priority issues were SRHR, justice, and, encouragingly, LGBTQ rights, whether in rural areas or urban areas. The least targeted issues included environment and climatic justice and disability rights.



As mentioned above, one factor that stood out in Uganda is that despite criminalization and stigmatization, a surprisingly large number of YFOs are currently organizing around sexual and gender minorities issues, tackling discussions and action around mental health and wellness, sexuality and body positivity, economic skilling, shelter and security programs, policy advocacy, violence, emergency relief, human trafficking, and HIV.

On the flip side, disability rights in Uganda remain an invisible issue in YFM organising. Only one respondent mentioned disability rights as a main focus of their work, and only one other mentioned having a project that specifically targeted persons with disabilities.

### **3.2 CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS THAT YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANISERS FACE**

Across the board, similar challenges and barriers that the YFOs faced were witnessed. Below are the issues highlighted most frequently by the young feminist organisers interviewed in each of the three countries.

**i. Limited or no funding and resource access:** The number one challenge that was expressed by the majority of participants was the lack of reliable funding or no access at all to funding. Young feminists felt that they were financially unable to sustain feminist work or develop their organizational capacity, even relaying fears of having to close soon. Although there was a visible passion for the work, they were unable to pay workers, acquire office space, and equipment, or grow individual technical capacity. Donors are often not receptive to young feminist organizations and prioritize structures and time spent operating rather than ideas and the impact they may create.

Several respondents mentioned that coalitions are dominated by elites and led by few people who centralised all the coalition opportunities, and hence few members are benefiting. Leadership tends to be weak, inconsistent, and personalised. In some cases, respondents mentioned that they joined a coalition because it was part of a project. Once the project phased out, and there was no funding, the movement ended. Because of the lack of resources, participation in (largely urban) events and forums is difficult, and smaller organisations are dominated by big ones.

**ii. Limited organisational development capacity:** Many YFOs stated they did not have expertise in organisational development aspects such as fundraising, policy

creation, report writing, leadership structures, and proper registration of their entities. Many were organising around a number of issues that they were unable to handle and had no specific vision for execution. The focus on various thematic areas, rather than focusing on specific areas as preferred by donors (SRHR, GBV and so on) also lowered the likelihood of receiving funding.

In addition, most respondents mentioned that it was harder for rural organisations and networks to get support than for urban organisations. A recurring complaint was that a number of funding opportunities nowadays can only be found online, which does not work well for rural areas with little/no network and electricity. In addition, the costs of engaging with rural organisations is higher and therefore many coalitions cannot afford to do so.

Although the members have greater awareness and understanding of the community needs, they lack the expertise to monitor and evaluate the programs they run. Members of the transgender community for instance miss out on training that could build them up due to their identification documents.

“Trans people have been having challenges of attending trainings because of requirements by hotels for document verifications which do not match and raises a lot of questions, accessing public washrooms is challenging as well making them avoid trainings and sensitization meetings,”

**iii. Limited intergenerational or movement focused work:** YFMs are afraid to work intergenerationally, and most of them are working individually rather than within the structures of the local, regional or global feminist movements. Participants in intergenerational feminist events described these spaces as toxic, intimidating, unwelcoming, and closed off to a few mostly elite and older feminists. A few young feminists even mentioned disassociation with older feminists and their spaces in order to protect their mental health.

“I used to work in a feminist organization. Feminist organizations are more toxic than other organizations; I insist that one should disassociate and find peace.”

YFMs working around climatic justice were found to have the least mentorship and contact with wider feminist movements. Most respondents wholly felt that they were much more able to create deeper meaningful relationships within other generalised, non-feminist, political, and global gender equality movements like gender equality fora, youth movements, and women issue consortiums and organisations.

**iv. Lack of community support for feminist organisations:** Nearly all respondents mentioned that they faced backlash from their communities, which feel that the YFs are seeking to break up families and are causing trouble. Women activists are viewed negatively in local communities, and some also experience sextortion in order to be given the room to continue with their work. Respondents noted that communities often labelled so-called feminists as women who do not want to get married and saw feminism as a fight for power between men and women.

**v. Security threats:** Harsh environments have hindered the organising of young women, who receive threats from their families, political actors, communities and security organs such as the police. A lot of young feminists reported increased cyberbullying. Although all sorts of young feminists reported a certain level of feeling unsafe and receiving threats, LGBTQ persons, sex workers, and political organisers received more aggressive threats from state agencies, other political opponents, the media, and their families and communities.

LBTQ organizations specifically reported more hostility from local leaders, media, and security structures, declaring more glaring threats such as shelter raids, killings, and having to relocate or shut down operations because of fear for their lives that is supported in part by discriminatory laws and policies.

“Working in the slum area of Kibra is a bit dangerous, the dingy alleys are very unsafe, and you never know who is waiting and who holds something against you, especially after a rescue,”

**vi. Discriminative laws and policies:** The laws in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have remained a stumbling block to the organising of young women in the region, particularly for those organising around LBTQ, sex worker and abortion rights. In recent years, there have been repeated attempts to strengthen these laws. especially propelled by anti-gender movements. Some laws pointed out in this research include the Penal Codes of all three States and their Constitutions, which place restrictions on free gender and sexual expression, sex work, and the right to abortion, leading to arbitrary arrests, forced medical exams, and detention of LBTQ persons, sex workers and those advocates for abortion rights.

Aside from these mainstream challenges mentioned by all respondents, a few others were also brought up as posing minor or unique challenges.

**vii. Religious and cultural norms:** According to some respondents, some religions believe that feminism is teaching women not to be submissive, which is considered negatively. The work that is done by YFMs is deeply affected by traditional and religious beliefs that are deep-seated within patriarchy. Not only does this increase hate crimes towards LBTQ persons, but it also inhibits access to SRHR and other justice efforts.

“Even when religious beliefs are not practical, they are used. For example, mothers have unplanned pregnancies and are not getting needed family planning because they claim that God will take care of them (children).”



**viii. Men's rights movements:** Increasingly, the men's rights movement has been gaining traction in the region, leading to increased abuse and cyberbullying of feminist organisers. Key figures in the men's rights movements mobilise large numbers of men to target women, with no consequences whatsoever being faced by the perpetrators of harm. Men's rights organisations have also reduced funding and watered down women's rights projects. There is an increasing perception across the region that boys and men are now the ones that are oppressed and need empowerment despite country statistics showing the opposite.

“Why are you only bringing the conversation to women when men are being left behind? Women are now the empowered ones, and yet men still have a long way to go.”

### **3.3 SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR YOUNG FEMINIST MOVEMENTS**

#### **3.3.1 Financial Support**

The overall perception is that there is a significant lack of financial support for YFOs and coalitions. YFOs and activists responded across the board that financial support is insufficient and sporadic. In Tanzania, founders and leaders of YFOs rely on their own sources of income to a large extent. Many respondents admitted to having another salary-paying job or income-generating activity, which they use to sustain their YFO. Per diems and consultancies are also common sources of funding in Tanzania with respondents explaining that they channeled the money from their per diems back into their projects and that consultancy projects provided much-needed additional income.

In Uganda, the majority of YFMs got financial support from friends, well-wishers and personal savings. Another major source of funding YFMs was from donors (International, regional and national organisations). Financial support was often in small amounts and not sustainable, lasting for short periods, which time period was often not enough for the impact of their projects to be felt. Oftentimes YFMs lacked

the capacity or confidence to fundraise. YFMs in rural areas, working on climatic and environmental justice as well as trans rights, received the most limited amounts of funding.

In Kenya, the majority of the Feminist organizations who participated in the young feminist study indicated they receive financial support from donors, grants, well-wishers, and government sponsorships through proposal writing and referrals from organisations and individuals. However, the funds received were insufficient to execute their projects and facilitating organisational costs. Smaller organisations at the grassroots mentioned not being able to receive international funding more often either because their proposal writing skills are poor or because their projects did not fall in the bracket of the activities being financed by the donors.

“We connect with different funders digitally when writing proposals for funding, but the limitation comes in when the proposal does not go through since it was not skilled enough as expected, or they were funding areas which were specific, and your proposal wasn’t for that area “

According to responses from about 12% of the feminist organizations approached in Kenya, funds have been inaccessible to the movements since the breakout of Covid 19 since donors prioritised funding issues to deal with Covid 19 as opposed to the usual projects. In other circumstances, the amount of funds was greatly reduced, which affected the feminist movements in a great way.

### **3.3.2 Social Support**

There was an inconsistent understanding of what social support entails, and respondents conflated social support with emotional support, rather than as a distinct form of support they could receive. This was perhaps in tandem with the earlier sentiments stated by majority of the respondents, namely that they do not feel

their communities agreed with or supported the feminist work they are doing and where they did, it was easier to quantify the support received in financial terms.

Even so, some aspects of social support were touched on by the respondents. In Kenya, feminist movements, including YFOs advocating for sex workers and LGBTQ, felt that the government, as a superstructure borne of the community, was not in support of their work, pointing out the laws in existence against this work.

More than half of the feminist organisations mentioned being supported by the local administrators such as chiefs, *nyumba kumi* ( a system introduced in Kenya that encouraged neighbours to get to know and assist one another), and police in their work, performing different roles such as reporting cases of violence to the movements, accompanying the survivors to justice centers and sometimes acting as witnesses, thereby ensuring that perpetrators are brought to book and justice is served.

Findings also revealed that some of the YFOs received support from social media and local media such as radio stations, which has the effect of amplifying their concerns to a larger audience of people on the projects that they run, as well as educating them on the effects that arise from harmful practices in the community.

Organisations supporting persons living with disabilities felt that their ideas and their members were not valued in the communities, hence the necessity for a lot of community sensitization and awareness on the need to support persons living with disabilities and the dangers of harmful practices against them.

Social support was also largely spoken of in the form of the support that smaller YFOs get from larger, more established organisations as well as from joining coalitions. In Kenya, respondents appreciated that larger organisations are building capacity through training on organisational management, fundraising, proposal writing, advocacy, monitoring, and evaluation they receive from fellowships they attend. These programmes are run by NGOs and organizations such as CREAM, Plan International, Equality Now, UN Women, and AMREF in Kenya. In Uganda, MEMPROW, Akina Mama Wa Afrika, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), FIDA, and the Dutch Embassy have been key allies.

This was the same case in Tanzania. One respondent suitably noted that support came from 'sisters in other organisations', with another key source of social support being through community and staff volunteerism, which was mentioned in nearly all discussions had with respondents. Many YFOs rely on their friends and families to support their initiatives. A few organisations also mentioned that the local government and local leaders were also a source of support. In some instances, faith leaders provided space in church to discuss women's issues.

Some respondents were more negative and noted that there is a lack of social support from communities and other feminist actors. One respondent in Manyara noted that social support is very insufficient and gave the example of having to stay with survivors of violence in their homes because there are no safe houses and no coalition to share responsibilities with.

### **3.3.3 Emotional Support**

Although emotional burnout from backlash, security threats, and work overload was common, very few YFs accessed any form of emotional support. They generally had no idea where they could even access it, but when they did, they mainly relied on friends for services such as therapy. In Uganda, organisations such as Akina Mama wa Africa, MEMPROW, and SHE Leads have streamlined free emotional support and mental health services for feminists, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While many organisations offered safe spaces in the form of shelters and sharing forums for beneficiaries, these resources were often not available for organisational leaders and activists.

In Tanzania, most respondents noted that they don't receive emotional support, which was fairly new to them. By and large, respondents felt that they got their emotional support from within themselves. Those few who did mention that they received emotional support externally referred to individuals from partner organisations, volunteers, or other women's groups. Friends and family were also noted as sources of emotional support. One respondent powerfully noted that many young feminist organizations and coalitions uphold the value of sisterhood in

navigating their day-to-day live, and this provides them with the emotional support that they need to keep going.

In Kenya, it was noted that the majority of the feminist organizations did not have access to counselling services to offer the psychosocial support needed to do feminist work effectively. About a quarter of the respondents mentioned having formed groups to help them emotionally, finding mentors whom they shared their thoughts and feelings with, and being part of the civil society organisations network and gender sector working groups in their counties, where they discussed the issues affecting them and possible solutions to the issues. A few YFOs had participated in fellowships organized by various organizations such as Akili Dada, where they learned skills for self-care, which they continue to practise. Most of the young feminists confessed that they had to look for psychosocial support for themselves since it was not provided by their organizations.

From the findings, it was also noted that a small section of organisations allow their staff to take days off when tired emotionally. In contrast, others have debrief meetings where the feminists are free to share their feelings, but due to mistrust members prefer to engage in personal practices of self-care such as swimming and journaling.

"I have a mentor whom I got from Commonwealth African Young Women Mentorship Program around 2019; she was based in Australia and is now in London. She came through for me, even as a community leader. Akili Dada had a challenge of getting mentors on time, but I am glad I had Laura. She was really there, and I even reach out to her until to date. We have never met in person but she is always there to reassure me and provide support,"

### **3.4 FUNDING**

#### **3.4.1 Sources of Funding**

Most organisations that were profiled for this study expressed sentiments that accessing funding is a challenge for them. All respondents noted that sources of

funding are too few compared to the need and that they are biased towards urban, larger, and well-established organisations. It was also found that, where funding was accessible, the most common methods for accessing funding were: applying for grants by writing proposals, local as well as international fundraising efforts, use of personal funds, donations from well-wishers, receipt of funds from larger NGOs that work in the same area of organisation, profit as a result of running some form of enterprise, and support from county governments.

#### **3.4.1.1 Receipt of grants from larger organisations (both international and local)**

By far, this was the most mentioned method of accessing funds. The general process for this is that organisations find communication calling for proposals in order to win a grant. These proposals call for the organisation to detail their work as well as a plan on how they would utilise funds should they receive them.

The YFOs proceed to submit proposals, and some subsequently are successful and receive funds. This method of raising money calls for some fairly technical knowledge in order to present ideas effectively. Larger organisations have experienced more success with this channel as they can afford to hire people with expertise in proposal writing. On the other hand, organisations that are small and started by founders that do not particularly have the knowledge on writing proposals or the resources to hire a person miss out on this funding, despite being the ones that would greatly benefit from it. Organisations in rural areas as well as in informal settlements, are the biggest casualties of this, especially with regard to accessing funds from international donors.

In accessing funds from locally based NGOs, technical ability is less of a challenge because the 'giving' organisation more often than not, knows the work that the 'receiving' organisation does as a result of referrals or by reason of belonging to a network or community of feminist organisations.

#### **3.4.1.2 Use of personal funds**

Founders often use their own funds to finance operations and projects, especially when their organisations are in the inception stage. The challenge here is that their funds may be limited and once their own money runs out, all the work they are involved in comes to a stop.

‘As of now, I have paid rent in advance for two months and have food for the next two weeks. After this, I have no idea how we are going to carry out activities. We may have to stop until I can save up again.’

#### **3.4.2.3 Calling for donations from well-wishers**

Most of the YFOs that participated in this study have called for donations at one time or another with varying success. The more the organisations fundraise, the less their success with each subsequent round. Well-wishers get ‘donation fatigue’ and stop donating altogether. In places where there have been extended periods of humanitarian crisis, the impact of donor fatigue and funding gaps can be fatal, and women are disproportionately affected.

Some of the organisations have leveraged technology and social media for their benefit in order to drive up the amounts of money that can be raised. Mobile money services such as M-Pesa and Airtel Money are used widely in East Africa, and nearly all adults have access to and use mobile money. This has changed virtually everything about how people pay for items and transfer money as everything can be paid for by mobile money. Donations can also be given online. The organisations that can write a ‘proposal’ on the internet by showing their work and its impact more effectively put themselves in a better position to receive donations online. Platforms such as M-Changa (Africa's largest Online Fundraising Platform) have been used. Founders also use personal connections with friends and family to raise funds for their organisations.

In Uganda, it was found that crowdfunding using gofundme and social media platforms and business entity funding through corporate social responsibility

budgets were notably rare, and there were no government funding sources mentioned.

#### **3.4.1.4 Receipt of funds from larger NGOs**

In Kenya, more established feminist organizations receive grants and subsequently give the money to smaller organizations. A good example of this would be AkiliDada (the anchor organization of this study in Kenya) which receives grants from larger organizations and then sub-grants to smaller organizations that may have more reach at the grassroots.

In Tanzania, whereas most respondents knew a number of international and regional funders, such as Sisters Without Borders, Segal Foundation, Dadas, various UN agencies, the Wellspring Foundation, and the Malala Fund, many organisations had never received funding from these sources. The most commonly mentioned donor that had funded any of the YFOs was Women Fund Tanzania (WFT). One organisation also mentioned the Pastoralist Women's Council (PWC).

#### **3.4.1.5 Engaging in activities to generate income**

Donations and dependency on well-wishers has proven to be an unreliable way to fund feminist work sustainably. There is a real need for feminist organisations to engage in income generating activities to keep meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

Organisations interviewed engaged in a number of businesses, including but not limited to: catering, soap making, making artwork with beads, and such. The feminists also use these enterprises to provide employment to the communities around them and the communities they serve.



Other channels of resource mobilisation included partnerships with local organisations that offered spaces for training, offices, and joint implementation of activities.

### **3.4.2 Reliability of Funding**

Donor funding was noted to be unreliable and in Uganda was limited, with an average of around 15,000 USD that would last for anywhere from 3 months to 1 year. Organisations often received funds from the same donors and reported that they felt like there was a need to increase their scope of funding base as the competition was high among the few funds. Trans-activism based organisations were more likely to report receiving the lowest amounts of funding with less than 1000 dollars annually.

In the case of Tanzania, respondents generally felt that funding was inadequate, did not cater to the needs of rural and marginal organisations, and was very difficult to access. The majority of respondents had attempted to apply for funding but had not been successful.

Most respondents from rural areas, and even a number in urban areas, noted that there is little funding going to remote areas. A lot of opportunities are online, which does not suit organisations in remote areas with limited resources and limited access to the internet. Many respondents felt that there is an urban bias that funders are not addressing.

The majority of the respondents from the YFOs in Kenya also shared the view that funding is not reliable. 33% of respondents interviewed confirmed to be running their organisations using local funding only, 23% received international funding only and 38% received both international and local funding. When it comes to the frequency of the funding, half the respondents receive yearly funding, two-fifths receive funding with no frequency, while the remaining one-tenth receive it in either three or six-month intervals. Half of the study population rated the funding sufficiency to be average (3), while the other two quarters rated it at 2 and 1, respectively, which is the lowest in terms of sufficiency.

### **3.4.3 Donors and Partners**

Throughout the East African region, and indeed across the continent, there are some larger organisations that act as umbrella organisations to smaller YFOs. One is FEMNET, a Pan-African Feminist and membership-based network that ensures that the voices of African women are amplified and that women's needs and aspirations are prioritised in key policy dialogues and outcomes. The African Women's Development Fund, UN Women, UNDP Ford Foundation, Hivos, and the European Union are some other strategic partners.

There are also many federations and networks that work locally. In Kenya, the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and the Youth and Advocacy Network collaborate on the basis or organizing around the same issues i.e., LGBTQIA+ rights and feminist advocacy. This is done to make conducting projects more cost-effective. In Tanzania, Strome Foundation, WFT, FCS, TGNP, KWIEKO, Sisters without Borders, US Embassy, French Embassy, Segal Foundation, FRIDA, African Visionary Fund, and Malala Fund, amongst others, were mentioned as working locally to provide funding. In the case of Uganda, a mix of local and regional funders were mentioned, including embassies such as the French, Belgium and Dutch embassies, and women's funds such as FRIDA, Global Fund for Women, Akina Mama Wa Africa, and MADIRO Fund.

In Kenya, the county governments were also mentioned by about 8% of the respondents as donors or even partners for their work. The national government was not mentioned at all as a partner or even donor due to the fact perhaps that the Constitution of Kenya devolves these functions directly to the counties. The same was the case in Uganda, where very few participants mentioned partnerships with government agencies or individual politicians for policy advocacy and security needs, but this was limited.

#### **3.4.4. Application Process and Success**

Building on the points above regarding the reliability of funding, respondents also felt that the process of applying is extremely complex and does not cater to the needs and realities of small YFOs. There are often multiple requirements that YFOs cannot meet, e.g., the need for audit reports, an existing organisational income of not less than USD 50,000, bank statements, etc. All respondents in Tanzania felt that the eligibility criteria are too difficult for them to meet. When YFOs apply, there is no feedback on why their bids are unsuccessful, which makes it difficult for them to improve and become more competitive.

A large number of respondents noted that it appears funders do not trust local, small, women-led, or girl-led organisations. This is a result of the eligibility criteria that automatically discriminate against those types of organisations. It is also compounded by perceptions from a number of respondents that funders are usually urban-based and focused. The majority of respondents, therefore, felt that local organisations are disadvantaged compared to larger, urban ones.

Ugandan respondents communicated that there is low success for organisations in accessing donor funds above 5000 USD. YFs did not feel that the application process was complicated, only that it was rigged as persons to benefit those who had already been chosen. YFOs also did not feel like they fulfilled the requirements of most grants as they were unregistered, and lacked the necessary organisational structures and expertise in proposal writing. These factors made the success rate low.

“The moment you get your first funding, you have to sustain it, have incremental activities. The mistake currently being made is asking for too little and doing too much, which makes the funders limit the donations. In my applications, I share a detailed work plan, timelines, action plans, results, resources, project name, goals, and description, which gives me the advantage to access more funding.”

### **3.5 AVAILABLE STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS AND SERVICES FOR YOUNG FEMINIST MOVEMENTS**

YFOs consider funders and networks as the only type of structure and service available. Many respondents were able to list out a number of existing networks and coalitions, some in their locality, some at the national level, and even some international ones. To mention a few local coalitions in Tanzania included Shinyanga Ending Violence Against Women and Children Network, SMASH for Adolescent Girls in Mwanza, MWAMAKIBA in Bagamoyo, and BANGONET; national coalitions includes NACONGO, Menstrual Hygiene Coalition, Women Directors Forum, MKUKI coalition, Young Women EDs, TEN/MET, Tanzania Youth SRHR Coalition, Tanzania Women Human Rights Defenders, and Tanzania Ending Child Marriage Network; international coalitions included Sisters Without Borders, LANDESA, Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition, and Girls Not Brides.

Despite their ability to list out various networks and coalitions, many YFOs in Tanzania did not mention the existence of any other structures of service that are fit for YFOs. There was also no mention of having utilised such structures or services. Some respondents did not even have access to any coalition or network in their area. Others noted that it is not easy to join coalition networks or initiate coalitions if the organisation is still infant, and that the information gap on women's rights stakeholders between local and national, and international organisations is still deepening. By contrast, the majority of YFOs in Uganda were aware of or efficiently accessing available structures. YFs had more awareness of social and financial support than emotional support structures and services. Financial support structures were flagged as limited, and most YFMs were applying and writing proposals to a limited number of the same funders reducing the success rate for access to funding.

Respondents from more urban, connected areas noted the advantages of being feminist organisations and that it gave them support and recognition by the government, donors, and communities. It also allows them to link with national level organisations and spaces, which provide some structure for their movement. Some

respondents mentioned WFT as the main available structure; they consider it revolutionary.

Many YFOs rely on each other when possible. They invite each other to meetings and forums, attempt to collaborate on activities, share information, and provide emotional support. They do this with very little if any, resources. Where YFOs were able to join coalitions or networks, this was done mainly for purposes of learning, networking, gaining information, sharing opportunities, encouraging one other, collaboration, capacity building, addressing common feminist issues, and generally building partnerships.

In Uganda, emotional and mental health support and services were noted to be very expensive, and most YFs relied on friends to provide therapy. Some YFs had received access to free short term services under organisations such as MEMPROW, Akina Mama Wa Afrika and the SHE Leads project. Many YFs working in sex work and LGBTQ communities were also able to access legal support through Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF).

YFs were also able to create and expand their social networks with community elders, cultural and religious leaders, and other opinion leaders. They relied on the expertise of these leaders as trainers, facilitators and mediators, as well as offering in-kind contributions.

Key themes that arose from the responses of Kenyan YFs were psychosocial support, capacity building, peer counseling, networking and convenings, staff psychosocial support, training, mentorship, and collaboration. Institutions such as KISLEB, Girls First Network, CREAM, Creative Action Institute, Akili Dada, and Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA) were highlighted as institutions that facilitate or have facilitated sessions on social, emotional, and mental support. It was pointed out that the young feminists were part of institutions and networking spaces that would rely on donors to facilitate emotional and social support for their constituents, for example, through convenings to build solidarity and networks for psychosocial support as well, though this was pointed out to be expensive. YFOs also access support through team-building activities and webinars on self-care.

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **Funding and support**

All the YFOs interviewed spoke of the significant lack of funds available to support their work. Most organisations work with very little, if any, institutional funding.

Much of the work is driven by the passion and commitment of the founders and their core teams and is therefore also limited to the amount of resources, know-how, and experience that this collective can bring to their initiatives.

A lack of funding, as has been noted above, often drives the YFs to embark on side projects, second jobs, and other time-consuming activities in order to supplement their incomes. This raises a concern as far as the ability of these young women to adequately bring their all to their work. A focus on secondary activities that raise the income of the women, although necessary, has the unfortunate effect of reducing their impact as far as their feminist organising goes.

At the same time, these YFOs are facing significant challenges, including at times a lack of understanding and support from the very communities that they face. Due to their gender and their age- and often as well the label of 'feminist'- these YFOs can be ostracised by the community, lacking social and emotional support, and yet attempting to tackle entrenched social norms and practices.

The combination of limited financial and community support puts YFOs in a precarious position. Despite the best intentions and commitment, they cannot mature and mobilise collective action. This weakens the idea of a feminist movement that is inclusive of young feminist organisations and activists.

Where funding does exist, its social and emotional dimensions need to be considered. Funding, as provided by donors and institutions, goes towards the feminist organising work, often being allocated to specific projects for specific time periods. After speaking to numerous young women across the region, it is our argument that this is insufficient. Considering that the idea of funding is to keep the YFs from seeking secondary sources of funding, the funds allocated by donors ought to be sufficient to provide support outside of the projects themselves. Young feminists need salaries and accommodations that will enable them to support themselves as well as their families adequately, in order for them to focus their efforts on their work. Outside of working for larger institutions, it is impossible for a young feminist to have access to childcare, health insurance, or other allowances that ensure the well-being of the organiser. This goes against the feminist ideals espoused

and paints a picture where institutional work is favoured as opposed to working rurally in one's own community.

This conversation calls into question the larger issue of donor funding, the forms it takes, the persons it reaches, and the boxes that it forces its recipients into. Young feminists are forced to fit themselves into the mould in order to receive assistance. This mould tends to take the form of creating an NGO, setting out specific areas of organising, and writing proposals and reports in order to get and keep funding. As was noted in the findings, there are key areas in which feminists in East Africa are organising, namely GBV, SRHR, and education. This is not because these are the more prevalent issues facing the region but because funding is most available for these initiatives. The support from donors is trend-based and so, rather than focus on their passions, YFs, in order to be successful, must keep their ear to the ground in order to be constantly in the know as to what thematic areas are in vogue for donors. This means, in 2022, for instance, pivoting towards feminist work that also brings in matters such as Covid 19 and climate change. While these are noble and important projects, to push out existing projects that are also in dire need of funding stuns feminist movement building.

Additionally, larger organisations tend to receive funding due to their ability to articulate themselves in their proposals and reports, even though their impact on the ground might not be as great as that of the YFOs. A result of this is demoralisation in the application process for funding, especially when it comes to proposal writing, where unsuccessful applicants receive no feedback from the proposals they submit, and so have no idea of what to improve on.

Overall, what role does the donor movement play in advancing or regressing the feminist movement? It would appear that the donor movement is a double-edged sword, providing much-needed funding that would otherwise be difficult to source whilst at the same time creating silos that run against the feminist ethos: favouring urban organising to rural movements, demanding structures in order for YFOs to be taken seriously, and creating silos that work to inhibit rather than expand movement building. As a consequence, the NGOisation of organising has become a necessary



evil for YFOs, even though it does not serve their larger community goals and the initial reasons why they got into organising work in the first place.

### **Movement and coalition building**

Young feminists begin and conduct their organising work from a place of lived experience. Many of the respondents interviewed said that they began their organisations after witnessing harm in their own communities, or even after experiencing it themselves, as in the case of an advocate for domestic workers who stated that she had been one herself and wanted to improve the conditions of domestic work in her country. Once these individuals begin their organising efforts, they find that it might be more beneficial to be part of a larger coalition, building community with like-minded persons who can assist them in advancing their cause.

However, as mentioned already, YFOs are burdened by the youth factor, the feminist factor and - if based outside of main urban centers - by the geographical marginalisation. At the same time, coalitions and funders tend to be urban-based and drawn to each other for historical, pragmatic, and structural factors. This, therefore, leaves YFOs out in the cold, so to speak, with their specific needs not sufficiently understood, acknowledged, and responded to.

It is, therefore, difficult for YFOs to be part of larger coalitions and networks, yet at the same time, they do not have sufficient resources of their own to establish their own networks and coalitions. Similarly, although there are a number of funders supporting feminist organisations and WROs, they are not necessarily able to appreciate the specific needs of small, remote, infant organisations, which YFOs tend to be.

Generational gaps also pose a problem in attempts at movement building. Older feminist organisations though more established, are not very willing to assist younger organisations through the provision of knowledge to do feminist the work, find funding, and so on. In fact, they use their longevity and experience to take up the bulk of the funding available for feminist movement building.

But is there truly a feminist movement in the region? With so many young women being reluctant or afraid to identify themselves as feminists due to the backlash that they may face, and with a lot of them opting to categorise themselves as working in the larger gender space, refusing to take on feminist language and processes, it is hard to say that a robust, intergenerational feminist movement is being built in the region. Not only are there problems that arise from young women feeling shut out from associating with older feminists due to respectability politics, but there is also the issue that those who are open to feminist movement building are in the minority due to the stigma associated with the word.

### **Rurality and urbanity**

There is a stark difference between the awareness and knowledge of the various organisations and activists interviewed. There are those that hold a considerable understanding of feminism, are well-networked with like-minded organisations, and have access to national platforms. Then there are those who lack basic conceptual clarity on what being a feminist organisation means and do not have associations with other organisations in their geographical area, let alone at the national level.

The key distinction is geographical location, and often also level of education as a consequence. Urban-based organisations tend to be better informed and networked, with a staff that is better educated. They also have better access to funding, which further advantages them. Rural-based organisations are limited by weak connectivity, remoteness, and an operating context that is poorer and even more patriarchal, thus further limiting their ability to mobilise support and resources.

A sizeable number of organisations spoke extensively about the perceived urban bias of funders and also of larger organisations and existing coalitions. Some of the reasons for these are obviously structural; funders have to manage fiduciary risk and therefore target organisations that already have a level of institutional capacity. However, this does put rural-based YFOs at a triple disadvantage: they are feminist, led by young people, and based in rural areas.

Organisations in rural areas are disconnected from national platforms and coalitions because of their remoteness and the associated costs that would be involved if they were to be active in urban-based platforms and activities. Because of their lack of funding, their marginal locations, and their lack of experience, YFOs are often left out of coalitions or remain passive members. In turn, coalitions are often hosted and led by larger, better-established, and more urban organisations whose agendas and concerns may differ from those of YFOs, and who therefore do not respond to the needs of the YFOs and their constituencies.

### **Religion, culture and patriarchy**

Of all fields of organising work, there is a great deal of pushback against feminist organising, and this pushback comes from multiple sectors. Feminist organising challenges core beliefs across religion, culture, and social structure. Because this work is so transformative, and requires such an overhaul of both thought and practice, there is great resistance. Young feminists fear backlash from their religious leaders, their own communities, and even at home (where patriarchal structures dominate the running of the home and dictate the things that one is or is not allowed to do as a woman). Their work is especially taxing as they are perceived as rebellious and wayward, creating unnecessary tensions in communities that would seemingly run smoothly were it not for these interventions that are considered to be foreign in nature and therefore counter to long-established beliefs.

To be young, under-resourced, and battling the long-held structures and belief systems is incredibly brave work that demands as much support as a young feminist can possibly get, even beyond the financial. Discussions of emotional and social support need to focus more heavily on cushioning young feminists against the backlash they may receive for their work.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As has been noted, various actors have a role to play in supporting young feminists in their work, as well as in providing the key networks and funding sources that would enable YFOs to adequately conduct their work. From the analysis section however, it is clear that there are some points of weakness that could use evaluation in order to improve the quality of support lent to YFOs, and subsequently improve the work done on the ground. Below are a few suggestions.

### **Recommendations for Donors**

Donors need to take cognisance of their exclusionary practices in funding and work to be more flexible and responsive in their approaches to funding so as to meet the young women where they are in their organising process. Funders and donors also need to be conscious of their practices and power dynamics that are both dividing and forcing YFOs to fit into what is deemed 'professional' in order to access information, and steer away from forcing YFOs into formalising themselves. This would include creating innovative funding mechanisms or streams to support YFOs in their diversities, whether in formal or informal spheres. An intersectional approach to funding that does not box YFOs into fad projects and programmes would be most beneficial, both to the YFs themselves and the communities that they represent.

In fact, rather than setting up rigid criteria and requiring that organisations meet these in order to receive support - a condition which makes it so that only the most privileged organisations receive support again and again - donors ought to seek out the YFOs, through the networks and coalitions created, figure out their points of need, and tailor make their support to fit these needs. This means that donors need to leverage their resources to map out and reach out to YFOs as a mitigating strategy for the barrier to access brought about by the digital and urban divides so as to reach YFOs in the margins.

Periodic and limited funding ought to also be disbanded, with a shift from project based funding to needs based funding being made. Young women organisers need funding that goes beyond their projects and helps them to sustain themselves. They also need consistent funding that lasts them through the years in order to enable them to focus on their work rather than expending their energy and mental capacity worrying about where their next cycle of funding will come from. Donors also need to provide feedback to YFOs on both successful and unsuccessful bids as an investment in their growth and personal and professional development.

The online space can be leveraged for growth. Even in rural areas, young feminists are increasingly using social media, both to access information and to reach potential funders. Donors can take this a few steps further, for instance, by utilising the online space to provide databases of the funding sources that are available throughout the year, as well as who would be eligible. Training materials on applying for funds can be put online for anyone to access. Funding can be used to provide translation services that make the communication sent out accessible and understandable to YFOs and young feminists outside the urban areas. The online space can also be used to provide emotional support; therapists nowadays provide their services online, and there are many trusted apps that can be used for self-care practice, mediation, therapy, and so on. Where subscriptions are required, donors can extend their funding to provide these services to less-resourced young feminists.

### **Recommendations for Feminist Coalitions/ WROs**

Feminist organisations and WROs are best placed to provide the YFOs with the coaching, mentoring, and psychosocial support that they require. Coalitions need to keep at the forefront the promise to be one's sister's keeper. They should build referral mechanisms that effectively ensure they continually advocate for and bring visibility to YFOs, beyond the usual organisations, often in the urban areas, that tend to have the most visibility. By shining a torch on the less prominent organisations, they will create an environment where resources are spread out more equitably across the region.

Increased accessibility to mentoring and coalition spaces for YFOs would also go a long way in building capacity for growth and improvement, as well as intentionally bridging the intergenerational gap and breaking down the power dynamics that exist in coalition spaces. Increased accessibility would entail making networking and coalition spaces more accessible to all categories of YFOs by removing financial barriers such as annual subscription fees, or subsidising the same for those organisations that do not have the financial excess to make these contributions.

At the heart of the call for increased (access to) mentoring by more seasoned feminists is the need for intergenerational conversations and movement building, which we believe would resolve the issues of lack of conceptual clarity as well as that of the rural urban divide. An emphasis on collaborative movement building across generations will enable resources to flow and be decentralised, whether these resources be intellectual or financial. Networking across generations will reduce gatekeeping and open up avenues for young feminists in their breadth to build strong, long-lasting movements that do not die off with their generation. Conceptual clarity will also ensure that the movements built become less toxic and exclusionary, as all groups of feminists will better understand that they are working towards a common goal, which is the liberation of all persons from oppressive, patriarchal systems.

Coalitions and networks can also play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of young women of all backgrounds both in the traditional and new media spaces, by creating channels through their own networks that enable the emerging organisers to push the feminist narrative and agenda strategically in order to counter the emerging anti-gender equality sentiments that are rapidly taking over the media spaces. Being younger, YFs can come up with innovative ways to tackle the anti-feminist pushback that is now springing up; working intergenerationally would produce the best results, as the older feminists could leverage their networks while the younger ones leverage their technical know-how.

Ultimately, extensive conversation across generations needs to be had about finding new ways of building the feminist movement and growth. The old script has been revised over and over, with the same conclusions being reached on ways of improving how donor funding is disseminated for maximum impact. However, a new script needs to be written; one that imagines new ways of growth. Already, the young feminists in the rural areas and the local communities show that intracommunal movement building has a real impact. The young feminists themselves are more passionate about the work that they are doing, as it grows out of them witnessing the weaknesses of their communities and working to improve the same. There is a collective investment in improvement, as those who understand the feminist work being done also understand that, in the long run, it will improve the conditions of the community, and the collective will be better for it. Sustainable support is sought beyond finances, and progress is owned by the many instead of the few. This way of working is successful in its own right, and ought to be better supported.

Urban scripts, which promote high-level funding and fund seeking, elitist, capitalist approaches to organising that see profit as progress, and project cycle-led approaches to tackle real community problems, have taken over our understandings of organising, and what success looks like. These scripts are what ought to be challenged, and the motivations behind working through the NGO model are questioned.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: TANZANIA QUESTIONNAIRE AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### **YOUNG FEMINIST RESEARCH TANZANIA**

#### **FGD QUESTIONS**

**JUNE 2022**

#### **Introduction**

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (moderator name). I am a Researcher working with Msichana Initiative on Young Feminist Organising which seek to understand

- The needs of what young feminists in the regions are looking for in terms of support (financial, social, mental etc.)



- Which local or regional women's funds have potential to deepen their work reaching young feminists, including for hard-to-reach populations;
- Whether there are emerging funds that need to be created at a more regional and local level?
- How we can decentralize funding streams to ensure accessibility to young feminists towards establishing cultures of philanthropy and solidarity within economies to sustain activism beyond periodic grants.

This analysis feed into a set of recommendations to improve funding opportunities for young feminist organisations and the wide support as they organize to find solutions for the challenges facing them. We would appreciate getting your perspective/ views.

### **Duration of the Interview**

This interview will take about an hour.

### **How the information will be used**

The information you provide in this interview will be used to produce a report on the status of young feminist organizations and coalitions, the available funding challenges and opportunities. The recommendations will be used for influencing funders to increase mobilization of flexible resources for young feminist organizations.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information or examples we gather during this interview will not be attributed to you personally. Your privacy will be protected; we will not include your name or any information in our reports that would make it possible to identify you without your consent. We also ask that what we discuss today remains here with us.

### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

You have the right to ask questions about this study and to have those questions answered by us before, during or after the interview. If you have any concerns, you also have the right to raise them and receive response from us at any time during this interview session.

If you have any further questions about the study or have any concerns at a later stage, feel free to send them to our Team Leaders through email address [redacted], or through phone no [redacted].

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

The decision to participate in this study is entirely yours. You may refuse to take part in this interview, and you are free to decline to respond to any of our questions or stop the interview at any time. You will not be penalized if you choose to not answer any question or to withdraw from this discussion.

The interview will take approximately one hour.

### **Consent to Participate in Interview**

Do you agree to participate in this interview today and for the interview to be recorded?

**Yes/ No**

Proceed with interview if the participant says 'Yes' above.

### **PART A: Coalition and partnership and feminism movements**

1. How can you explain your relationship with other young feminist organizations at your locality, national, sub-regional, regional and international level?
2. Are you a member of any coalition/movement? At your locality, national, sub-regional, regional and international level?
3. Why did you join such a coalition/movement?
4. What issues does the coalition/movement push? How does the coalition/movement push the issues?

5. Do you think the coalition/movement is meeting your expectation for joining it? If yes, why if not, why?
6. What are the challenges the coalition/movement is facing? Issue-wise, leadership-wise, resources-wise etc?
7. What kind of support you think coalitions should provide to young feminist organizations? Do they provide such support? To what extent? What are the challenges facing the coalition from providing such support?

#### **PART B: Coalition and partnership and feminism movements**

1. How can you explain your relationship with other young feminist organizations at your locality, national, sub-regional, regional and international level?
2. Are you a member of any coalition/movement? At your locality, national, sub-regional, regional and international level?
3. Why did you join such a coalition/movement?
4. What issues does the coalition/movement push? How does the coalition/movement push the issues?
5. Do you think the coalition/movement is meeting your expectation for joining it? If yes, why if not, why?
6. What are the challenges the coalition/movement is facing? Issue-wise, leadership-wise, resources-wise etc?
7. What kind of support you think coalitions should provide to young feminist organizations? Do they provide such support? To what extent? What are the challenges facing the coalition from providing such support?

#### **Part C: Organization and Coalition/Movement Support**

8. Where does your organization and the coalition(s) that you are part of get funds to push for your agenda/ issues?
  - a. Where do you get financial support (Operational & Programmatic)?
  - b. Where do you get technical support?
  - c. Where do you get emotional support?

- d. Where do you get social support?
9. Which of the supporters/donors/ can you describe as women-based funders for both your organization and the coalition(s) that you are part of?
  10. Why do you describe them as such? What makes them peculiar from other funders /How are they different?
  11. How simple is it to get funds from them, as an individual organization on one hand and the coalition(s) on the other hand?
  12. Are you getting any difficulties in accessing funds from Women Funders? What are the nuisance issues you encounter in engaging with Women Funds? PROBE about location? Priority areas? PROBE *both, as an individual organization on one hand and the coalition(s) on the other hand*
  13. Do you think the funds allocated to deal with girls/women's challenges are enough/ sufficient in Tanzania? Please explain.
  14. Do you think we need more women funds? PROBE for individual organizations on one hand and the coalition(s) on the other hand?
  15. Do you think women's funds are accessible to local YF in village/ rural communities? And to support marginal issues?
  16. How can these women funds improve environment to make the funding accessible to young feminist organizations? How can they reduce bureaucracy in the funding process?
  17. Do you know any emerging funding for girls and women issues? How did you know about them? Do you think they will revolutionalise the funding environment for young feminist organisations? How
  18. What should be done to improve sustainability of your organization and the coalitions/movements you are in?
  19. Do you have any questions for us?

END

## **APPENDIX B: UGANDA QUESTIONNAIRE AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Young Feminist Study \_Uganda**

#### **I. Opening Remarks, Expectations and Consent**

##### **Opening remarks (5 Minutes)**

Thanks for coming today. The goal of today's meeting is to understand young feminist organizing in order to positively influence funders and increase mobilization of flexible resources of young feminists. We are looking to understand what young feminists are seeking in terms of support, which funds exist to support the work as well as how young women are mobilizing across the globe for different rights. We are excited about this research because it will advance the work of feminist movements globally, regionally and nationally.

This research is run by MEMPROW in Uganda but is run currently being run across different East African countries as well including Tanzania and Kenya. MEMPROW is an organization that is interested in mentoring and grooming young female leaders within

communities mainly through capacity building efforts. Overall, it is a project funded by the Ford foundation.

The research is being administered across different themes by 5 young feminist researchers including the (Insert theme you are currently working with) to collect necessary information.

This specific session will last 2 hours with a bathroom break of 3 minutes requested at any time within the session. It will be led by (Insert your name) a current facilitator under the Young Feminist Research Uganda (You can introduce you and your college shortly and relevantly based on the different roles you will be playing in the session).

### **Consent clause (3 minutes)**

Before we start off this research session, we would love to inform you that you are all asked to give verbal( over microphone) or written consent(in the chat) to show that you are willingly participating in this research. Please feel free to refrain consent at this point. Please note that doing this will have no implications on your current or future relationship with either FORD or MEMPROW.

Please also note that this session will be recorded, the information used here will however only be used for only the purposes of the research and protected to the best of our abilities.

### **Expectations (5 minutes)**

There are a few basic rules to keep in mind while participating today;

1. This is a safe space. Please be respectful to other people's views. All feedback today will remain anonymous. In order to maintain anonymity, I just ask that anything that is said during our session is not repeated outside of our session.
2. No judgement, just love, empathy and understanding.
3. If anything arises from the session that you may need extra information or help on , please do not be afraid to reach out.

4. Everyone is expected to be an active participant. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers.
5. Speak freely but remember not to interrupt others while they are talking.
6. Note taking is for reporting purposes only and will be used for analysis. Names are not attached to the notes.
7. We are conducting these sessions at many of our sites. All information gathered will be analyzed to determine trends and make recommendations to research team. We will try to give individual feedback only when the report findings are released.

At this point, ask 2-3 participants to feel free to emphasize or add to the list.

## **II. Introductions (7 Minutes)**

Before we start, I'd like to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves in 30 seconds or a minute at the most . Tell us what your position is at their organization or just nationally is. What kind of work you do, name and location.

## **III. Interactive Exercise (10 minutes)**

Based on who you are as a person, think about a feminist utopia. Take 5 minutes to draw or write down a short poem what that would look like to you, what are its 3 main characteristics?

(Take 3-4 volunteers to discuss what you have come up with. This session is supposed to give facilitator of the understanding of feminism for participants but also ease participants into research)

## **IV. QUESTIONNAIRE (1 HOUR AND 30 MINUTES)**

(Remember to take 3 to 4 responses from participants for each question to save time. Please do not un-necessarily ask a question if you feel participants may have already answered it prior)

1. With whom and under what issues does your organization/ or as an individual activist do you work?
2. Describe the creative ways/ models that you have used in your work that you have found effective?
3. What are some of the barriers that you would say you are currently facing in your work (local, national, regional and global)?
4. What are you currently doing to solve these challenges?
5. Funding is a big deal for the work that young civil society organizations do but also individual activists. How would you currently describe your funding situation? (Concentrate on how, where they receive funding, other resource mobilization avenues and after how long they receive funding, who funds them and how much)
6. Apart from financial support, elaborate on any other programs that provide other forms of support for example emotionally and socially that you or someone close to you has been exposed to and have been fundamental in your work?
7. Based on your current, past or future lived and expected experience, what are some opportunities in which you think young feminists or feminist movements like yourself need support?
8. Please feel free to add any other thing that you feel may have been important but has been left out.
9. Lastly, please recommend any other person including phone number and email that may be relevant to this research.

End by thanking participants in their participation in the FGD and encourage them to continue learning from each other beyond today. Emphasize some of the learning that you



yourself have gotten as a result of the session. Remind them that, MEMPROW will only reach out when final report is done.

### **APPENDIX C: KENYA INVITATION LETTER**

Dear Valued Partner,

Greetings from Akili Dada!

Akili Dada is a leadership incubator anchored in the ethos that girls and young women CAN, DO, and LEAD. Our mission focuses on girls and women from underserved backgrounds, extending opportunities for access to education, leadership, and networks. After 17 years of engaging and collaborating with girls and women, our philosophy is embedded in igniting inherent power, amplifying voices and perspectives; while nurturing legacies of influence that can be sustained and replicated worldwide.

Young feminists are building critique and activism frameworks, that offer a proactive understanding on how to imagine, design and develop emancipatory narratives, technologies, spaces, and digital cultures, that undermine misogynist, racist, gender binarial and heteropatriarchal societal norms in the post-pandemic world. Young feminist movements both regionally and globally, have enormous potential to question and shift norms and build

movement alliances across the globe. While the tools for mobilisation, forms of activism, and the spaces for change (within institutions or outside, in global, regional, national institutions or within grassroots communities, or autonomously as activists) may differ across regions, the commitment to upholding constitutional and democratic principles through forms of collective action is very much the same among young feminists globally.

Akili Dada together with our team of seven young feminist researchers are currently conducting a research in East Africa on the needs of young feminist movements in the region. We believe that your organisation fits the bill of a young feminist organisation, and we would like to interview a member of your team to provide us with crucial information that will enable us to build solid research to achieve our intended impact as described below.

Movement-driven research must be constantly updated to better understand young feminists organizing and positively influencing funders to increase the mobilization of flexible resources for young feminists. The objective of this research is two-pronged: to conduct deep listening to existing movements and an initial assessment mapping phase to understand:

- The needs of young feminists in the region in terms of support (financial, social, mental, etc.)
- Which local or regional women's funds have the potential to deepen their work in reaching young feminists, including for those hard-to-reach populations;
- If there are any emerging funds that need to be created at a more regional and local level.
- How we can decentralise funding streams to ensure accessibility to young feminists towards establishing cultures of philanthropy and solidarity within economies to sustain activism beyond periodic grants.

In addition to this, Akili Dada is also working towards building a network of young feminist organisations and the young feminists, both for the purposes of furthering this research and of creating a networking space. We would be grateful if you could provide us with a list of the organizations and individuals/actors that would be suitable for this research and a contact person that we can reach out to. This list can be forwarded to [redacted] via email at [redacted].

Please let us know your availability for an hour-long interview between the 27th May to 4th June 2022 and the contact person that we will be interviewing.

Warmly,

[redacted]

Akili Dada

## **APPENDIX D: KENYA QUESTIONNAIRE AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Young Feminist Study \_Kenya**

Dear Dada,

Greetings from Akili Dada!

Akili Dada together with our team of seven young feminist researchers are currently conducting a research in East Africa on the needs of young feminist movements in the region. We believe that your organization fits the bill of a young feminist organization, and we would like to interview a member of your team to provide us with crucial information that will enable us to build solid research to achieve our intended impact as described below.

Movement-driven research must be constantly updated to better understand young feminists organizing and positively influencing funders to increase the mobilization of flexible resources for young feminists.

The objective of this research is two-pronged: to conduct deep listening to existing movements and an initial assessment mapping phase to understand:

- The needs of young feminists in the region in terms of support (financial, social, mental, etc.)
- Which local or regional women's funds have the potential to deepen their work in reaching young feminists, including for those hard-to-reach populations;
- If there are any emerging funds that need to be created at a more regional and local level.
- How we can decentralize funding streams to ensure accessibility to young feminists towards establishing cultures of philanthropy and solidarity within economies to sustain activism beyond periodic grants.

We would love to tap into your expertise and experiences to meet the objectives above. Please take time to fill in the short survey below.

Thank you Dada!

\* Required

1. Name of the organization\*
2. Please state your organization's mission and vision\*
3. Which areas do you work in ( Please specify the town, county and country(s))\*
4. From the above, how would you describe the settlement?\* *Mark only one oval.*

Urban Settlement

Rural Settlement

Informal Settlement

Dispersed Settlement

5. When did you start your initiative?\*
6. Which of the following issues are you organizing around?\* *Check all that apply.*

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Gender Pay Gap

Sex Workers Rights

LGBTQI Rights

Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWDs) rights

Female Genital Mutilation

Early Child Marriages

Leadership and Political Representation

Other

7. Since you started, how many women/girls have benefited from your initiative?\*

*Check all that apply.*

1-25

26-50

50 - 100

100 and above

8. Do you have access to funding?\* *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

9. If no, please explain?

10. How do you fund your initiatives?\* *Check all that apply.*

Donors

Well Wishers

Grants

Government Sponsorships

Individual (Self-funding)

11. Would you say that your source of funding is reliable? *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

12. Is the funding local or international? *Check all that apply.*

Local

International

13. On a scale of 1-5 rate the funding application process. *Mark only one oval.*

Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Easy

14. On a scale of 1-5 rate your success in getting the funding applied? *\* Mark only one oval.*

Unsuccessful 1 2 3 4 5 Successful

15. How frequently do you receive funding? *Check all that apply.*

Every three months

Every six months

Every year

Other:

16. Approximately, how much funding do you receive/ put into your initiative in a year?  
*Check all that apply.*

0 - 50,000ksh

50,000ksh - 100,000ksh

100,000 ksh - 500,000ksh

500,000ksh - above

17. On a scale of 1-5, how sufficient is the funding?\* *Mark only one oval.*

Insufficient 1 2 3 4 5 Sufficient

18. Are there programs that offer social, emotional and mental support to your movements?\* *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

19. From the above, please elaborate on your answer (If yes, list down which programs/initiatives)

20. If your answer was no, please share your thoughts on what social, emotional and mental support is important to your work?

21. On a scale of 1-5, how socially supported do you feel in your work?\* *Mark only one oval.*

Not Supported 1 2 3 4 5 Supported

22. On a scale of 1 to 5, how emotionally and mentally supported do you feel in your work?\* *Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

23. List the sort of non financial help you would like? \*

24. Any other feedback that you would wish to share with us?

25. I agree to the information shared above being used by Akili Dada and its partners for this and other relevant studies.\* *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No