



A group of adolescent girls participating in the Girl Shine programme that is run by UNFPA, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

## Resourcing girls directly: What does the current funding landscape for girl-and youth-led organisations look like?

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### Scope of the challenge

Amplifying girls' voices and visibility has been highlighted as a key approach both to ensure programming aims to meet their needs, and to increase young people's voice, agency and participation in decisions that affect their lives – both as individuals and collectively. There have been growing calls to increase funding to movements and organisations led by girls and youth (Arutynova et al., 2022; Salley, 2019; Mama Cash and FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund, 2018). To date, however, there is limited evidence on how much funding is

currently invested in adolescent-and youth-led organisations. Our previous research 'Investing in adolescent girls' mapped investments from 2016 to 2021, and found that only 5.5% of all official development assistance (ODA) went to programmes addressing gender and adolescents (Devonald et al., 2023a). Most of this funding went through United Nations specialised agencies, with very little going directly to local feminist organisations. This brief explores this data further in order to estimate how much ODA goes towards adolescent-and youth-led organisations.

### Methodology

To map investments focused on adolescent girls, we reviewed data from the largest donor ODA tracking dataset, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Creditor Reporting System (OECD-CRS) at the global level during 2020 and 2021. We selected the top 10 bilateral donors addressing gender equality (Canada, European Union (EU) institutions, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden the UK and the United States (US)) (Donor Tracker, 2019) for all low- and middle-income (LMICs) countries. We selected ODA that has gender equality as a principal or significant objective of the project/programme and then used keyword searches of project titles and long descriptions in the OECD-CRS database for age-specific terms to identify funding that goes towards adolescent- and youth-specific projects/programmes. For more information on the methodology, see Devonald et al., 2023a.

For the purposes of this brief we undertook an additional keyword search to identify ODA that goes towards adolescent- and youth-led organisations, using the keywords in Table 1.

### Findings

Young people have specific dedicated needs. It's not even for us to tell them what those are, but to bring them into the process to design, programming and agendas, in the form that works for them.

(Key informant, donor)

Our findings show that in 2021, only \$87 million of ODA focused on gender and adolescents provided by the top 10 bilateral donors went to programming that had an adolescent- or youth-led component, a very slight increase from the amount provided in 2020 (\$84 million). This is around 1% of all gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA provided by these donors (See Figure 1). Our previous research (Devonald et al., 2023) highlighted that bilateral donors' due diligence requirements for larger grants made it difficult to approve funding for smaller organisations, so they relied instead on disbursing relatively small grants through funds specifically for smaller civil society organisations (CSOs) or indirectly supporting youth organisations through larger agencies. Despite these efforts, the current funding levels are very low.

**Table 1: Search terms**

Population		-led
Girl	AND	-organis(z)ation(s)
Youth		-movements
Child		-networks
Adolescent		-organis(z)ed
Young women		
Student		
Young people		
Community-based organisations (CBOs)		
Feminist organis(z)ations		
Women's organis(z)ations		

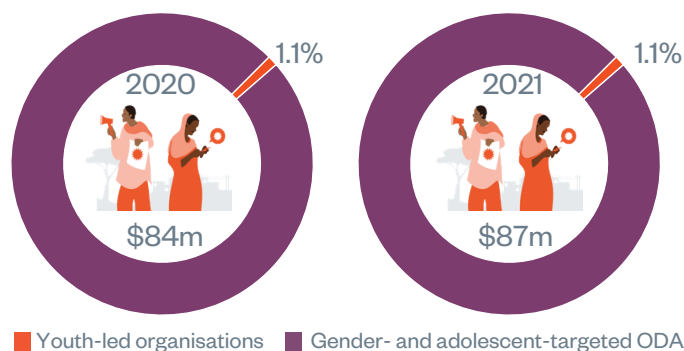
In 2021, Sweden was the largest bilateral donor to adolescent- and youth-led organisations (\$48 million) followed by Canada (\$20 million) and the Netherlands (\$8 million). The largest volume of funding went to the UNFPA-UNIOEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II, being conducted across East and Southern Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia, which involved supporting national governments and civil society partners, including women's groups and youth-led groups.

The top recipient country was the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which received (\$4 million) for a range of programming including the Power to Choose (a Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) project that includes youth organisations) and to CAFOD for a youth and women engagement project towards democracy and peace. The top sectors were Gender Equality (SDG 5) (\$48 million), as this included a sub-sector of 'women's rights organisations', followed by SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being (\$16 million) most of which went to SRH programmes, and SDG 16 Promote peace, justice and strong institutions (\$5 million), mainly for conflict-related peace and security programming.

## Discussion

Investing in adolescent- and youth-led organisations can be an important component of a broader package of interventions that aim to support adolescent girls' well-being. It is also in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and government commitments to involve young people in decision-making about their lives. Our research underscores, however, that there is currently extremely limited funding dedicated to adolescent- and youth-led programming. This suggests that there is an urgent need for further research

**Figure 1: ODA going to adolescent- and youth-led organisations (as a share of total ODA focused on gender and adolescents)**



Source: Devonald et al., 2023b

and evaluations to understand the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the funding that is channelled directly to adolescent girls and girl- and youth-led organisations, and to measure progress over time.

## References

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