GIRLS, THE AGENTS OF CHANGE

LESSONS FROM A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO FUNDING WITH AND FOR GIRLS
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Hosting the WFG at Stars Foundation, from 2014 - 2018 has been an immense honour. We have learnt so much from the Collective’s other funders, from our referral partners and from the incredible girl panelists we have worked with. Most of all, we have been inspired by the With and For Girls award winners around the world who through their unrelenting work to serve their communities and have their voices heard, continue to show us every day why it is so important for philanthropic funding to support girl-led groups.

As a Collective, we believe funders can and must play a leadership role in addressing the lack of resources available to grassroots girl-centred and girl-led organisations who we know are still under-recognised, underrepresented and underfunded.

We commissioned this independent evaluation to help us improve and to encourage other donors to take similar steps. We firmly believe that when funders see what powerful girl-led groups are capable of, when they understand why girls are a priority for equitable development, girl-led and girl-centred organisations can survive and thrive.

Involving girls in decision-making is at the core of the Collective’s philosophy. For the awards, it is adolescent girls around the world who interview the shortlisted organisations and have the final say on who receives the funds. For us, this ensures that girls are part of the process and the decisions. With that frame in mind, we wanted to ensure that girls’ voices were a fundamental part of this report. Twelve girls from Kenya and Nepal participated in the research and provided us with constructive insights on how the Collective can continue to refine and improve itself while keeping grassroots groups’ and girls’ voices at the fore.

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The Collective is deeply grateful to the Stars Foundation team, past and present, our allies and friends in the Strategic Partners of the Collective, and our Referral Partners around the world. We would like to thank the research team, Susana Fried, Anne Gathumbi and Maria Bordallo, who were supported by Rhon Reynolds, for this exhaustive and insightful research that has captured the essence and philosophy of the With and For Girls Collective and will help us realise our goals more efficiently in the future. We are deeply indebted to the girl researchers Mercy Odero, Florence Otieno, Karen Auma, Maryian Ayieko, Linnet Kyalo, Faith Ndung’u, Lucy Ayoma, Joyce Ouma, Astha Wagle, Prakriti Neupane, Rikkysha Khadka and Sagoon Bhetwal for their time and their vital participation in this research. A huge thank you also goes to Women LEAD in Nepal and BoxGirls in Kenya for their generous support.

Finally, a special mention goes to all the incredible grassroots organisations we have been honoured to meet and work with, the winners of the With and For Girls Award for their crucial contribution to girl-centred organising which continues to inspire us every day.
Funding for adolescent girls has been gaining traction in recent years. While feminist funders have traditionally focused on women and young people, there has been a drive to put more flexible funding in the hands of girl-led and girl-centred organisations.

At the forefront of this movement has been the With and For Girls Collective, which in addition to committing to flexible funding, has created a decision-making process that lets adolescent girls have the final say on where that funding should go. The Collective is a unique group that is bringing together and engaging a growing community of participatory grantmakers. It is uniquely placed to leverage data and insights on this sector, foster cross-learning and collaboration and guide policy and advocacy work.

**PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION**

This evaluation reviews and assesses the With and For Girls Collective, the With and For Girls Award and the awards journey with a view to drawing out lessons from the Collective’s experience to help encourage funders to increase flexible funding and other resources to girl-led and girl-centred organisations globally.

The evaluation captures learning and reflections on how to improve the award structure, increase girls’ engagement and boost the participation of partners as well as the wider donor community. The recommendations can be adapted and applied to a broad base of funders with a view to creating the conditions to fund girl-led organisations and help them flourish.

**THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS COLLECTIVE**

The With and For Girls Collective is a group of nine funders, convened by Purposeful that share the common belief that girls’ voices matter, and that girls are best placed to lead and inform on issues that affect them.

**TOGETHER, THEY CHAMPION THE COLLECTIVE ACTION OF GIRLS AS VITAL AGENTS OF CHANGE.**

The Collective is among the most relevant, effective and fast growing entities to bring resources and attention to grassroots girl-led and girl-centred groups by providing a robust award package to a wide range of global award winners. It has also launched new funds for winners aimed at providing longer-term core support and increasing visibility and collaboration for and between winners and other girl-led and girl-centred groups.

**TWELVE GIRLS CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS AND REVIEWED THE EVALUATION FINDINGS.**

The report uses several methods including an extensive desk review of Collective materials, interviews with Collective staff, Strategic Partners, award winners and girl panelists as well as focus group discussions and a survey of Referral Partners. In keeping with the independent evaluation team’s and the Collective’s commitment to girls’ engagement, a group of twelve girls conducted interviews and reviewed the evaluation findings.
The With and For Girls Award recognises work by grassroots, locally-led organisations with annual incomes of between US$20,000 to US$500,000 that work to improve the lives of girls (10-19 year olds) and foster leadership. The awards do not focus on a particular theme; instead, organisations must demonstrate strengths in engaging girls in governance, programme design and decision-making to ensure that their work is truly girl-led and/or girl-centred.

The award package includes funds and capacity building support, as well as networking opportunities and profile-raising activities for winning organisations.

In order to ensure geographical diversity and reach the widest range of girl-led and girl-centred groups, the award process relies on an impressive global network of Referral Partners—from local grassroots groups to Funders, networks, bi-lateral and multi-lateral organisations and INGOs—to source and nominate candidates for the award in five regions.

A key feature of the award is the participation of girls throughout the process. Each year, judging panels composed entirely of adolescent girls aged 13 to 18 (girl-led panels) get to choose the 20 winning organisations.

THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS AWARD

Organisations must demonstrate strengths in engaging girls in governance, programme design and decision-making to ensure that their work is truly girl-led and/or girl-centred.
FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

GIRL LEADERSHIP
The Collective has continuously sought ways to meaningfully involve adolescent girls (award winners and panellists) wherever possible. Inviting previous award winners to facilitate the girl-led panels has allowed winners to remain engaged even beyond their award. Nonetheless, more can be done to strengthen the meaningful involvement of girls by incorporating them in its governance structures as a measure of embracing participatory grantmaking fully.

GIRL CENTRED VS. GIRL-LED
The interchangeable use of the terms girl-led and girl-centred has resulted in many organisations defining themselves as girl-led but in reality being only girl-centred. Among the members of the Collective, there is no consensus around what “girl-led” means. While some have advocated for a strict definition, others have pointed out that truly girl-led groups are rare and this is part of the larger challenge around building girl leadership.

INTERNAL LEARNING AND REVIEW PROCESSES
The Collective has demonstrated a commitment to using evidence to inform practice through a consistent and regular internal learning and review process, with input from girls as well as from stakeholders. The aim is to integrate this feedback into meaningful change. The Collective has a repository of rich data that needs to be better analysed as part of its processes to draw out solid evidence on impact. This is imperative moving forward.

OPENING UP THE PROCESS TO REACH A WIDER BASE
A survey conducted by the Association of Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) of 740 women and girls’ organisations in 2011 showed that their median annual incomes were only US$20,000. This indicates that a large proportion of organisations don’t meet the lowest threshold of the With and For Girls Award (currently US$20,000). This criterion has contributed to underrepresentation in some regions. A review of the first year of the referral system showed that some poses challenges when trying to reach truly grassroots organisations.

ENGAGEMENT WITH RUNNERS-UP
The Collective provides tailored feedback to all applicants. This is rare, as many funders do not provide feedback to those that are not selected. This is highly commendable, however, it is important to engage runners-up beyond the award process itself.

MAINTAINING A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE MODEL
The Collective is a unique group that is bringing together and engaging a growing community of participatory grantmakers, implementers and Referral Partners, it is well placed to leverage data and insights on this sector, foster cross-learning and collaboration and guide policy and advocacy work. As such, it should aim high at leading such work, and expanding its horizons. It should strive for a strong organisational structure, solid learning and flexibility to adapt to a changing environment. After three intense years of shaping its processes and work methods, it is a good time for the Collective to focus on its mandate of influencing and strengthening the global community towards this end.

AMPLIFY GIRLS VOICES
The Collective is well placed to amplify emergent, notable trends on funding for girl-led and girl-centred work globally, and to take a leadership role in how larger institutions identify, discuss, and represent the movement of adolescent girls and young women in international spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASING GIRL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING
We recommend the creation of a girls’ participation advisory working group that would let girls advise on how best to meaningfully engage them in governance, decision-making and activities of the Collective.

AGREEMENT ABOUT GIRL-LED AND GIRL-CENTRED
We recommend a discussion among the Collective partners, as well as with the greater community working in the field, to agree on aspects of building greater girl leadership. This could take the form of a working group bringing together members of the Collective and experts from the field to examine these points and come up with a tighter definition of the terms girl-led and girl-centred, and to identify pointers that will help the Collective and others assess whether organisations are moving towards being girl-led. We also recommend approaching this issue with some flexibility in contexts where legal or societal restrictions prevent girls from taking on positions of leadership.

ENGAGING THE RUNNERS-UP
Using data to catalyse new funding for girl-led and girl-centred groups: As a Collective that seeks to leverage and catalyse new and expanded support for advancing the growth of girl-led and girl-centred organisations globally, it is important that the Collective uses its vast trove of data to analyse emerging trends in each of the regions to inform decision-making on funding needs and priorities by the Collective, its membership and the broader philanthropic community. This will make available a data-driven path to increased equity in the distribution of resources, both within the Collective and in the field of global philanthropy.

The Collective should also use data findings to advocate for increased and better targeted funding for girl-led and girl-centred organisations. We also recommend that the Collective consider adding this as a Strategic Objective on building the evidence base.

OPENING THE PROCESS TO REACH A WIDER BASE

We recommend lowering the income threshold to include organisations whose budgets are below US$20,000. This will open up award eligibility to smaller organisations and help find applicants from underrepresented regions that traditionally receive less funding.

We believe more groups can be reached by adding more languages to the process including the application forms, the website and communication material. Without the utmost efforts in these steps, the smaller grassroots groups will be locked out of the process.

REACHING THE FIELD BY INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH RUNNERS-UP
Runners-up provide an ideal pool of future award winners, having gone through the process and passed all the eligibility criteria to make it to the shortlist. The Collective should therefore put in place a mechanism to ensure that runners-up from previous years are able and invited to re-apply for the award, even if a Referral Partner has not nominated them a second time.

Capitalising on a unique opportunity to strengthen a global community advancing the work of girl-led and girl-centred organisations: The coming years should be used to expand and share innovative and diverse funding models and experiments that have the potential to not only fund local activists and groups but also change the power relations when it comes to money. This is essential in tackling the root causes of poverty and discrimination and will contribute to lasting social change. It is the right time to conduct research on the effectiveness of participatory grantmaking and the possibilities for replicating and scaling existing models.
Amplifying girls’ voices in the press:

**The Guardian**

$1m awarded to groups working to empower girls and young women

**STYLIST**

These girl-led grassroots organisations seriously deserve your attention

**The Daily Telegraph**

We need to give platform to the Malalas of the world

**DIVA**

6 badass women’s groups fighting for gender equality today

**Alliance**

Interview: Teenage panellists deciding on $1 million funding

**Reefery29**

4 young Muslim women on the biggest misconceptions people have of them

**World Day Against Trafficking: Girls hold the solution

Contributing to philanthropy and development reports:
- State of Funding for Girls: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3L1f8L2mAGlPdzxUzWp4/GUIdp/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3L1f8L2mAGlPdzxUzWp4/GUIdp/view)

Presenting With and For Girls at sector events:
- OECD Marketplace for Coalitions, Paris
- UNSCA Roundtable on New Coalitions for SDG, New York
- Asian Venture Philanthropy Network Annual meeting, Singapore
- Elevate Children Funders Group AGM, London and Brussels
- Human Rights Funders AGM, New York and Mexico City
- #MeToo and Philanthropy event, London
- TEDx Women, London
- Girls Not Brides Annual Meeting, Kuala Lumpur

Amplifying girls’ voices in the philanthropic space:
- Girls and representatives from FFAC, Cameroon; NIGEE, Kenya; PGI, Kenya; Feminist Approach to Technology, India; NFFCK, Kyrgyzstan; Girls United for Human Rights, Pakistan; and Katwce Sistahood, Zimbabwe attended and spoke at the Girls Not Brides annual meeting.
- A girl from Integrate UK spoke on a panel at the #MeToo and Philanthropy event and at the Elevate Children Funders Group AGM.
- Girls from Association AMA, Guatemala; NIGEE, Kenya; Women LEAD, Nepal; I Am A Girl Barbados, Barbados; Ponton Group of Sex Educators, Poland; Young Women’s Freedom Centre, USA; AMOJO, Nicaragua; ALEIS, Romania; Pastoralist Girls Initiative, Kenya; Shoruq Organisation, Palestine; Arab Women in Science and Engineering (AWiSE), Israel attended and led the final closing plenary of the Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) conference in Mexico City.

**IMPACT**

**SINCE 2014:**
- 103 Referral Partners onboarded
- 474 nominations received
- 137 organisations shortlisted
- 15 girls panels, involving 78 girls across 9 countries (UK, Romania, Egypt, Lebanon, Tanzania, Kenya, India, Nepal, Mexico)
- 60 organisations awarded in 41 countries that work directly with over 153,067 people, and together reach 1,543,360 people indirectly
- $1.95m distributed in flexible funding and over $1.5m leveraged in additional funding to Award winners
- Since 2014:
  - 103 Referral Partners onboarded
  - 15 girls panels, involving 78 girls across 9 countries (UK, Romania, Egypt, Lebanon, Tanzania, Kenya, India, Nepal, Mexico)
  - 474 nominations received
  - 137 organisations shortlisted
AWARD WINNERS: 2015, 2016 AND 2017

The Americas and Caribbean

Barbados
I am a Girl Barbados

Belize
POWA - Productive Organisation for Women In Action

Bolivia
A Breeze of Hope

El Salvador
Mujeres de Xochilt

Guatemala
Asociación Coincidiir

Mexico
Melei Xojobal

Nicaragua
Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres por Nuestros Derechos Humanos (MOMUNDH)


Europe and Central Asia

United Kingdom
Integrate UK

Romania
Asociatia pentru Libertatea si Egalitatea de Gen I (ALEG)

Germany
Maedchentreff Bielefeld Junglesbenzentrum

Ukraine
Youth NGO of the Zhytomyr Oblast “Parity” (NGO Parity)

Serbia
NGO ATINA

Kyrgyzstan
Girl Activists of Kyrgyzstan

The National Federation of Women’s Communities of Kyrgyzstan (NFFCK)

Armenia
The Women’s Resource Center

Moldova
TEKEDU

Russia
Doveriye

Poland
Ponton Group of Sex Educators

Middle East and North Africa

Morocco
Fondation YTTO pour l’hébergement et la Réhabilitation des Femmes Victimes de Violence

Les Associations Errahma des Handicapées Azilal (Errahma)

Israel
AI-Bir Cultivating Culture & Community Organisation

Occupied Palestinian Territories

Stars of Hope

Psycho Social Counselling Centre for Women (PSCCW)

Shuruq Organisation

Arab Women in Science and Engineering (AWSC)

ADWAR Roles for Social Change Association

Jordan
Try Center for Training & Education

Lebanon
Katswe Sistahood

South Africa
Rock Girl

Burundi
Association des Maman Centrales pour la paix et le développement (AMC)

Nigeria
HACEY Health Initiative

Rwanda
Organisation of Women in Sports (AWOS)

Zimbabwe
Katswe Sistahood

The Girls Legacy

South Africa
Rock Girl

Cameroon
Forum des Femmes Autochtones du Cameroun

Asia and the Pacific

Pakistan
Aware Girls

Girls United for Human Rights

Samoa
Samoa Victim Support Group

Myanmar
Girl Determined

Hong Kong
Teen’s Key – Young Women Development Network

Mongolia
The ‘PRINCESS’ Center

Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence (BHASV)

Nepal
Her Turn

Shakti Samuha

Women LEAD Nepal

India
Feminist Approach to Technology

Philippines
Roots of Health

The World

Emma

Kicks

Deutsche Welle

Pérez

Morgan Stanley

Pacheco

Philippine Women’s University

Philippines

Shahidah

Hassan

Hajeri

Hamed

Syria

Syrian Women’s League

Egypt

Tawasol for developing IsTabi Antar

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THEMES COVERED BY AWARD WINNERS IN 2015, 2016 AND 2017

- Health and mental health
- Indigenous rights
- Human rights defenders
- Peace-building and security
- Technology and innovation
- Media, arts, cultural representation
- Humanitarian relief
- Rights
- Disability rights
- Environment, climate change and sustainability
- Economic empowerment
- Gender-based violence
- LGBTQ rights
- Peace-building and security
- Political participation and leadership
- Domestic workers’ rights
- Refugee and migrant rights
- Safe cities
- Trafficking
- Education
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Technology and innovation

SUPPORTING GIRL-LED AND GIRL-CENTRED ORGANISATIONS
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS COLLECTIVE?

The With and For Girls Collective is a group of nine funders, convened by Purposeful - Comic Relief, EMpower, FRIDA-The Young Feminist Fund, Global Fund for Children, Mama Cash, Nike Foundation, Novo Foundation, Plan International and Stars Foundation - that share a common belief that girls’ voices matter, and that girls are best placed to lead and inform on issues that affect them. Together, they champion the collective action of girls as vital agents of change.

Since 2014, Stars Foundation has been the Collective’s convener, and together with its Strategic Partners (other members of the Collective), they manifest a clear commitment to feminist, rights-affirming philanthropy. The Collective believes that when girls organise, they and their organisations play a leading role in transforming societies and advancing gender equality.

The Collective provides fully flexible funds, capacity building support and development resources, and a range of other resources to grassroots girl-centred and girl-led organisations through its annual With and For Girls Award. It also advocates for greater investment in and flexible funding to girl-driven organisations.

Since it was launched in 2014, the Collective has awarded over US$1.95 million in flexible funding to...
60 grassroots, girl-focused or girl-led organisations across 41 countries, and at least US$400,000 worth of capacity development support, profile raising and access to networking opportunities.

In 2016, the Collective developed a new theory of change and results framework using its learnings from the first two years of operations which included information from application forms and follow-up communication with award winners and panelists. This helped better reflect the realities facing girl-led and girl-centred organisations globally.

THE NEW RESULTS FRAMEWORK IS Aimed AT Ensuring that:

- Girls have agency, platform, space and support to enjoy equality, justice, opportunity and inclusion at home, in their communities and in society.

In order to better achieve these goals, reduce bottlenecks in operations and facilitate increased donor engagement, Collective members decided in 2017 to change their structure to a two-tier system made up of members and donors. The central decision-making body (CDB) is made up of a subset of members (eight to 12 organisations) that lead for three year terms, with each CDB member contributing the time of up to two people: one core member and one alternate. To join the CDB, a Collective member must be a donor organisation that moves money to grassroots, girl-led organisations (either through the Collective or separately), and be contributing some monetary or non-monetary resource.

THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK HAS FOUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Increase recognition and resources available for girl-led and girl-centred organisations
- A positive shift in funding practices in the donor community to increase flexible funding available to girl-led and girl-centred groups
- Increase capacity of girl-led and girl-centred organisations to function effectively, and to foster girl leadership
- Increase collaboration between girl-led and girl-centred organisations

In order to better achieve these goals, reduce bottlenecks in operations and facilitate increased donor engagement, Collective members decided in 2017 to change their structure to a two-tier system made up of members and donors. The central decision-making body (CDB) is made up of a subset of members (eight to 12 organisations) that lead for three year terms, with each CDB member contributing the time of up to two people: one core member and one alternate. To join the CDB, a Collective member must be a donor organisation that moves money to grassroots, girl-led organisations (either through the Collective or separately), and be contributing some monetary or non-monetary resource.

THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS AWARD

The With and For Girls Award recognises work by grassroots, locally-led organisations with annual incomes of between US$20,000 to US$500,000 that work to improve the lives of girls (10-19 year olds) and foster girl leadership. The awards do not focus on a particular theme; instead, organisations must demonstrate strengths in engaging girls in governance, programme design and decision-making to ensure that their work is truly girl-led and/or girl-centred.

The award package includes funds and capacity building support, as well as networking opportunities and profile raising activities for winning organisations. A vital aspect of the award is that the funds are fully flexible. This means that the use of the funds is entirely decided by award winners, with the only caveat being that they be used for charitable purposes and be spent within a period of two years.

In order to ensure geographical diversity and reach the widest range of girl-led and girl-centred groups, the award process relies on a wide network of Referral Partners — from local grassroots groups to Funders, networks, bi-lateral and multi-lateral organisations and INGOs — to source and nominate candidates for the award in five regions.

A key feature of the award is the participation of girls throughout the process. Each year, judging panels composed entirely of adolescent girls aged 13 to 18 (girl-led panels) get to choose the 20 winning organisations, with four winners selected from each of the five regions. Winners and one girl panellist from each region are then invited to attend Awards Week, a week-long series of events so far hosted by the convener in London, which includes a public awards ceremony, networking and skills-building sessions and media engagements.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation reviews and assesses the With and For Girls Collective, the With and For Girls Award and the awards journey. It is designed to facilitate learning and sharing for a range of audiences. In keeping with the evaluation team’s and the Collective’s commitment to girls’ engagement, a group of twelve girls (four in Nepal and eight in Kenya) conducted interviews and reviewed the evaluation findings. The evaluation team trained the girls in person and provided them with online mentorship to conduct the 14 interviews with award winners in their own and adjacent regions.

The evaluation’s goal is to capture learning and reflections on how to improve the award structure, increase girls’ engagement and boost the participation of partners as well as the wider donor community. It provides recommendations on how to extract more learning from the Collective’s experience to date and make modifications that would help increase flexible funding and other resources to girl-led and girl-centred organisations globally.

The process used several methods including an extensive desk review of Collective materials, interviews with Collective staff, Strategic Partners, award winners and girl panellists as well as focus group discussions and a survey of Referral Partners. On many questions raised with girls’ organisations, there was a broad range of answers and often no predominant view. The responses from the organisations were as varied as the contexts in which they work and mirrored the different priorities of each group.
WE BELIEVE
Girl-centred and girl-led organisations are on the frontline of responding to girls' needs. These organisations are able to propel change that is transformational and build a more equitable world.

BUT
Many girl-centred and girl-led organisations do not have the money and resources they need to operate efficiently and achieve their goals.

SO
Funders can and must address the lack of money and resources available to grassroots girl-centred and girl-led organisations.

FUNDERS ARE
• Aware of the reality for girls
• Prioritising funding for girl-led and girl-centred organisations
• Funding in a meaningful way that meets grassroots girls' needs

GIRLS ARE
• Heard and respected
• Able to access services such as health and education
• Included in decision making processes that affect them

THE AWARDS JOURNEY
TO REACH AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE...

GIRL-LED ORGANISATIONS ARE
• Better resourced
• Visible within the sector
• Well connected

PROFILE RAISING
• Increased recognition to strong girl-centred and girl-led organisations
• Showcasing successes of girl-centred and girl-led organisations

PROFILING
• Showcasing the work of girl-centred and girl-led organisations

APPROPRIATE FUNDING
Change the way donors fund so that they:
• Increase flexible funding
• Increase funding directly to grassroots girls organisations
• Increase funding to girl-centred or girl-led groups

ACCESS TO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
• Help organisations to connect, share and build knowledge and skills
• Provide opportunities for increased collaboration
• Provide opportunities to contribute to and shape the With and For Girls Collective’s work

CAPACITY BUILDING
Help girl-centred and girl-led groups improve so that they:
• Function effectively and sustainably
• Foster girl-leadership

TO SUPPORT
• Provide resources and support for capacity building

EQUALITY

THEORY OF CHANGE

HOW WE DO THIS

THE AWARDS JOURNEY
Eligible organisations are assessed against the extent to which they demonstrate that they are:

- Girl-centred
- The extent to which they demonstrate girl leadership within their organisation
- The quality, delivery and impact of programming
- The strength of institutional systems in place to ensure responsible management of funds.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate that they are grassroots and locally-led, driven by the community they serve; that they work in collaboration with others; and are respectful of diversity and include those from marginalised communities.
Income brackets. A survey conducted by the Association of Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) of 740 women and girls’ organisations in 2011 showed that their median annual incomes were only US$20,000. This indicates that a large proportion of organisations don’t meet the lowest threshold of the With and For Girls Award (currently US$20,000). Feedback received from Referral Partners stressed that on several occasions, they had found candidates that had met all the eligibility criteria, but fell outside the required income bracket.

This criterion has contributed to underrepresentation in some regions. A review of the first year of the referral system showed that some partners had struggled to find applicants from the Middle East and North Africa as well as Europe and Central Asia because groups in these regions tended to have annual incomes below US$20,000.

Respondents also raised concerns about the potential unfairness of the current brackets, where for example organisations with an annual budget of US$150,000 would be competing in the same category as those with US$50,000 budget, possibly giving an undue advantage to the larger organisation.

Minimum years of operation. The 3-year minimum eligibility criterion presents a barrier for newer grassroots organisations that are getting off the ground and need core support. For example, Women Win, one of the Collective’s Referral Partners, supported two new organisations that had no other funders. It had been a very positive experience and Women Win regretted not finding applicants from the Middle East and North Africa that, despite having religious affiliations, are committed to feminist, social justice values and girl leadership. A strict requirement of girl leadership by some members has advocated for a tighter definition, some Collective members have argued that, despite having religious affiliations, are not being able to nominate these groups for the With and For Girls Award.

Girl-led vs. girl-centred. One commonly raised concern was the interchangeable use of the terms girl-led and girl-centred, resulting in many organisations defining themselves as girl-led but in reality, being girl-centred. The criterion has contributed to underrepresentation in some regions. A review of the first year of the referral system showed that some partners had struggled to find applicants from the Middle East and North Africa as well as Europe and Central Asia because groups in these regions tended to have annual incomes below US$20,000.

Respondents also raised concerns about the potential unfairness of the current brackets, where for example organisations with an annual budget of US$150,000 would be competing in the same category as those with US$50,000 budget, possibly giving an undue advantage to the larger organisation.

Legal and cultural barriers to girl-leadership. In many countries, legal barriers or cultural norms prevent girls from taking on leadership positions. In Bangladesh, for example, it is illegal for persons under 18 to be part of an organisation’s board of directors or trustees. In light of this, the Collective has opted to also support girl-centred groups, in order for leadership opportunities to develop organically. However, there was no way to gauge whether or not this was happening other than through award winners’ self-reporting.

Donor driven girl-leadership. One of the key discussions in the focus group was around the fact that the strict requirement of girl leadership by some donors meant that organisations could in theory put girls in leadership positions only symbolically, in order to become eligible for an award. The participants could point to a concrete example of organisations doing this.

Religious affiliation: One of the reflections gathered in the evaluation was that, with greater scrutiny, it is possible for the Collective to find outstanding groups that, despite having religious affiliations, are committed to feminist, social justice values and girl leadership. A large number of groups in all regions have their roots in or are supported in some way by religious groups that are largely rights-based and not intrusive but this criterion prevents them from being nominated.

It seems there is no clear consensus among Collective members on the definition of “girl-led.” Some Collective members have advocated for a tighter definition, while others have emphasised how difficult it is to find groups that are truly girl-led. Some Collective members suggested that funds only be given to girl-centred groups that are clearly moving girls into leadership and decision-making roles, which would ensure that the commitment of award winners to girls as leaders remains at the core of the award package.

We recommend expanding the current income range to include groups working with less than US$20,000 by adding an extra category for organisations whose income is between US$1,000 and US$20,000. This might also increase access to applicants from underrepresented regions that often have lower annual budgets. A large number of the interviewees in the evaluation confirmed that having a minimum of three years’ experience was more beneficial. In this regard, and in order avoid potential issues of unfair competition within categories with wide income ranges, we recommend the following structure:

**Category 1:** US$1,000 – US$5,000
**Category 2:** US$5,000 – US$200,000
**Category 3:** US$200,000 – US$500,000

The total amount received per tier would also need to be revised and adapted to each category.

**MANAGING THREE-TIER INCOME BRACKET MODEL**

In a three-tier model, we recommend that the requirement that organisations be operational for three years be waived for groups in the first income bracket. Instead, we propose to lower that requirement to one year. This would also allow organisations to join the process early on and still preserve the spirit of the award, which recognises work already done, as opposed to providing seed funding. The Collective would need to devise a means of verification of the group’s time of operation, such as media coverage. We recommend maintaining the three-year minimum criterion for both upper income brackets.

**TOWARDS A FULL GIRL-LED AND GIRL-CENTRED APPROACH**

There are several aspects to building greater girl leadership that we recommend:

- The Collective must clarify the terms “girl-led,” “girl-centred” and “girl leadership” as a step towards tightening the definition, and seek coherence in the documentation that goes to Referral Partners and potential award winners.
- In order to rule out any potential cases of false, or donor driven, girl leadership, there should be better oversight during the selection process.
- In order to meaningfully engage girls, we recommend that the Collective form a girl-led advisory group that works to increase the participation of girls and include their voice on matters of governance, decision-making and activities of the Collective.

**EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS**

The relevance and interpretation of the eligibility criteria as well as the understanding of girl-led and girl-centred groups differ from place to place and the Collective may benefit from further research and contextual analysis for a more accurate assessment of each situation. We recommend adapting the current eligibility criteria with a more nuanced or flexible approach to allow for the inclusion of smaller organisations, and in countries where the legal or cultural context prevents girls from being in leadership positions.

**CALLING FOR ADAPTATION IN DIFFERENT REGIONS**

There should be more nuance in this criterion to take into account organisations with religious affiliations that make efforts to uphold the rights of girls. This might mean adding specific questions in the initial EOI that reflect rights-based approaches or exploring the organisations’ websites or other materials when possible.

**EXAMINING PARTICIPATION AND FAIRNESS FOR VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS**

We recommend that the eligibility criteria be more clearly articulated and communicated to all the Referral Partners and runners-up and included in the Collective’s website, once it is available.

There might also be room for more flexibility on the eligibility criteria. For example, for organisations doing innovative work that meets some but not all of the other criteria, a process could be developed to provide support, including for example having one organisation mentor another, thereby helping to build the movement and to strengthen collaboration across the sector.

**FORMATION OF COUNTRY PROFILES**

We recommend that the Collective creates comprehensive country summaries detailing country-specific data including risks and information receiving foreign funding. A deeper understanding of regional disparities should be prioritised in upcoming discussions with Strategic Partners and other key stakeholders.
B. ENGAGING WITH REFERRAL PARTNERS

The Wth and For Girls Award is not an open application process. Applicants can only participate by referral. The Collective has built an impressive global network of like-minded organisations working to advance the rights of girls and women. These Referral Partners come from a broad base of organisations, including funders and non-governmental organisations. Some are international, some are regional while others have a national focus. The referral process guarantees that only the most suitable candidates enter the selection process. This saves time for both the applicants and assessors and adds an extra layer of due diligence to the application process.

The Collective has also begun inviting previous award winners to become Referral Partners in their respective countries, thereby engaging the winners even after they receive their award. The Collective’s network of Referral Partners has grown steadily over the years: from 24 Referral Partners in 2015 to 102 partners in 2017.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

A streamlined referral process. Nominations are currently made via an online form in a new simplified format that has reduced the administrative load for Collective staff. Referral Partners have also expressed increased satisfaction with the process and have found it to be clearer each year. In 2016, a new quota was added that limited nominations to two to three per country, to ensure wider regional representation. It was also decided after one of the internal reviews that Referral Partners, rather than the Collective, would send out the invitation to submit EOIs as a means to increase applications.

Communication with Referral Partners. Referral Partners have pointed to a general need for clarification of the eligibility criteria and for changes made from year to year in the referral system to be spelled out more clearly. Also, some Referral Partners, especially those who do not have access to reliable internet connection, or those with very small teams, emphasised the need for more time to respond to the call for applicants. It is also noteworthy to mention that some Referral Partners said they would like to have more information about the Collective, its goals and achievements.

In terms of communication with staff, according to the 2017 Referral Partner Survey, 90% of respondents were satisfied with the level of communication by the Collective’s staff. Comments included “excellent and clear communication”, “It’s amazing the team. The response was very fast and clear” and “Thank you for the prompt responses to our questions!” These comments echo responses from the referral survey conducted by the evaluation team, which noted the promptness and availability of the team to help with any queries.

While Referral Partners have generally been satisfied with the amount and the quality of communication from the convenor, some glitches in the communication process were noted. For instance, several Referral Partners said they had been contacted more than once by different people with the same questions, and some pointed out a lack of response to their follow-up.

Pre-selecting the right type and number of organisations. Setting the right number of organisations to invite to apply has been a complex process, given the need to ensure balance between geography and the two income brackets. Many Referral Partners commented on the difficulty of making sure that the nominees fit the eligibility criteria. Those nominated in the first year of the award were generally long-standing partners or grantees of the Referral Partners that had already gone through similar due diligence processes. In the following years, the effort to find and run background checks on new organisations increased exponentially. In some regions, like the Pacific, large distances between islands made personalised visits to organisations impossible.

Recurring underrepresentation of several regions. A large amount of data collected points to the overall underrepresentation of a few regions or sub-regions, namely the Middle East and North Africa, South America, or Francophone and Lusophone Africa. Measures put in place after the first year to resolve this issue, including timelines. It should clarify expectations of time investment, and where appropriate, include information on the financial support given. It should also include information on monitoring and evaluation (such as when to expect a survey to complete after the process, etc.). This is especially important for Referral Partners who nominate their own members. Providing better, friendlier and more visual instructions to Referral Partners is critical. We believe that the Collective’s website would be the ideal place for these materials.

Adding more languages to the process: EOIs are currently available in English, Spanish, French and Russian. Given that they are not available in Arabic could certainly explain the MENA region’s underrepresentation. In addition to EOIs, it is of paramount importance to add more languages to the referral process including in information packages and materials. This would help tap into a larger network of grassroots organisations.

Financial burden on Referral Partners. The referral system is a resource intensive process that includes a lot of oral and written communication between the convenor and Referral Partners. Referral Partners are asked to become familiar with the eligibility and assessment criteria, nominate their most suitable partners, sign a Memorandum of Understanding and inform the nominee(s) on the nomination and the award process. Many of the award winners interviewed said they would like to become Referral Partners but struggle with their own competing priorities such as fundraising or general management of the organisation.

Tracking and follow-up with Referral Partners. The Collective has done robust work in tracking top Referral Partners compared to those that have not nominated relevant groups. This screening of Referral Partners was found to be useful and has helped avoid fatigue among the team who previously had to conduct pre-checks on non-eligible organisations. However, while this is helpful information, less effort has gone into understanding the reasons behind unsuccessful nominations and capturing more information on how the process might be strengthened.

Adding more languages to the process: Referral Partners: In response to a request for more clarity from Referral Partners, we recommend the introduction of a comprehensive user-friendly ‘guide’ or short video for Referral Partners. This guide should provide more information on the Collective and better communicate the details and flow of the referral process, including timelines. It should clarify expectations of time investment, and where appropriate, include information on the financial support given. These could include access to fundraising resources, or to the Community of Practice online trainings. Grant making Referral Partners would also benefit from receiving a mapping of policies, regulations and risks or the sharing of a list of nominated or eligible organisations for them to consider in their grantmaking.

Financial support for Referral Partners: Providing Referral Partners with some financial compensation for their work could make it more attractive and more feasible for organisations to take on this role. We recommend providing Referral Partners with some financial support or incentive packages. These could include access to fundraising resources, or to the Community of Practice online trainings. Grant making Referral Partners would also benefit from receiving a mapping of policies, regulations and risks or the sharing of a list of nominated or eligible organisations for them to consider in their grantmaking.

Active identifying Referral Partners from underrepresented regions: The Collective should make a concerted effort to map out and identify local organisations in regions that have been traditionally underrepresented. This might be accomplished by conducting landscape analyses and research in the regions of lower representation to better understand how to build capacity among groups that could become competitive in the award process. We also recommend reaching out to community foundations, which in some countries, like Brazil, are numerous and have not been a direct target to date.

While there is no easy solution to this uneven representation, we believe that our previous recommendation of creating a third income bracket and changing the income categories would help to bring broader geographical diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a comprehensive user-friendly guide for Referral Partners: In response to a request for more clarity from Referral Partners, we recommend the introduction of a comprehensive user-friendly ‘guide’ or short video for Referral Partners. This guide should provide more information on the Collective and better communicate the details and flow of the referral process, including timelines. It should clarify expectations of time investment, and where appropriate, include information on the financial support given. It should also include information on monitoring and evaluation (such as when to expect a survey to complete after the process, etc.). This is especially important for Referral Partners who nominate their own members. Providing better, friendlier and more visual instructions to Referral Partners is critical. We believe that the Collective’s website would be the ideal place for these materials.

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Tracking and follow-up with Referral Partners: The success of the Referral Partners might depend on many different aspects, including the information received from the Collective, or the time available to look for potential applicants. A better understanding of the reasons why some Referral Partners are less successful than others should be further examined, followed by a strategy to better communicate with them to maximise their impact.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Allowing more time for sourcing potential nominees: A common concern raised by many Referral Partners has been the lack of time to find and carry out the first due diligence test with nominees. The Collective should consider granting the referral process more time.

Going beyond women and girls’ fora: To date most of the efforts to find Referral Partners have focused on women’s funds and organisations working on women and girls’ issues. We recommend looking into other sectors, such as environmental organisations, or organisations working on political rights and disability issues. Collective members could partner with other interested donors to commission a global mapping of girl-led and girl-centred organisations in each region. This information can then be used to build a database, using existing technology infrastructure. It could be updated every two years and be the “go to” database for a wide variety of entities interested in working with girls’ organisations.

Engaging Referral Partners beyond the nominations: The extensive network of Referral Partners should be further capitalised for other areas of the Collective’s work. Referral Partners could offer capacity building support and mentorship to smaller groups in the application process, including on how to provide the required supporting documentation. When it comes to smaller organisations that have been operating informally or are unregistered, Referral Partners might also consider serving as the fiscal partner to the organisation. If the Collective were to expand the Referral Partners’ role, it is important that the recommendation around providing funding support to them is more carefully considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

C. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Eligible nominees are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) that asks questions about the organisation’s activities and processes. The application is available in four languages - English, French, Spanish and Russian - to broaden the reach of the application process.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Preparation of EOIs: The fact that it is not available in Arabic may be connected to the relative scarcity of EOIs from the MENA region. In addition, there are many other widely used languages such as Portuguese or Hindi that are not included, which poses challenges when trying to reach truly grassroots organisations.

The ease of preparing the EOI or lack of it depends on the capacity of the nominee. This written application privileges those who write well and have experience in writing proposals. Some organisations found the process easy and the application template thoughtfully put together while noting that it was lengthy and elaborate. Others found it complex, repetitive, overwhelming and time consuming due to the level of detail required. In some cases, the language used was difficult which could discourage small groups from applying.

Some applicants felt they were given enough preparation time, others did not. Some liked the fact that it was mostly an outcome-based as opposed to an output-based application process. Others said that having a Skype call with a Collective staff member to explain the process was particularly helpful. As a result, the quality of EOIs is quite varied, depending on the experience and capacity of applicants.

The Collective has consistently grappled with the question of whether to select the best application or whether to also take into consideration the applicants’ context. In a number of instances, the Collective received applications from groups that did not meet even the basic criteria. Thus, on the one hand, there is a desire to ensure that the nomination process has a wide reach. On the other, there are as many views about the application process as there are applicants.

There have also been questions over the exact role of the Referral Partners with some organisations receiving help with the EOI process while others did not and others still did not even know who had referred them.

Review of EOIs: Overall, the evaluation team found that the Collective has designed a thoughtful and manageable selection process that is generally well executed and well-managed, thorough and detailed. The process of reviewing the EOI is intense and time consuming with some Strategic Partners reporting that they found it took more time than they had anticipated and were surprised by the amount of work involved. Strategic Partners in phase 1 reviews was a good way to give them insights into the process and enable them to engage in a better and more thorough way. For the Collective’s convenor, coordinating the entire process is hectic and entails a huge amount of work and time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Simplify the EOI: It would be difficult to have an EOI process that meets the needs of all the applicants but the critical issue is to ensure that the procedure is simple enough to accommodate the nominees in all their diversities and operating contexts.

Some of the questions asked in the EOI could be moved to the eligibility assessment/due diligence phase to eliminate some of the detail and make the process shorter and less burdensome. There was a suggestion to make the EOI application briefer so that people could qualify to the next stage, and have a second phase to obtain information on organisational aspects. Including girls (prior award winners for example, or panellists) in reviewing the application would be important.

Extending the award cycle: The Collective may want to consider holding the award every 18 months or every two years. This would help all involved feel less overwhelmed in getting the award ready. Spacing it out may also allow the Collective to be more deliberate in targeting requests with fewer nominations and at the same time reach more award winners. It will also allow for more relationship building between award winners and award managers and support for groups in the form of capacity development and fundraising.

“The Collective May Want To Consider Holding The Award Every 18 Months Or Every Two Years. This Would Help All Involved Feel Less Overwhelmed In Getting The Award Ready.”

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be registered to have a fiscal host. Many small emerging
groups unable to register or operate. Groups must also
registration and operation requirements leave some
several times in the evaluation. In some contexts, strict
environments for civil society organisations came up
The issue of closing civic spaces and hostile operating
process is sound.
winners, it would appear that the risk assessment
Risk assessment. Given that there have been no
the group's fiscal sponsor where applicable.
checks. It also entails an internet-based reputational risk
the group's responses to EOI questions; and reference
on the group's bank account and finances submitted;
the applicant is based; a quick financial risk analysis based
political, economic and legal context of the country where
conducted by the convener, looking at risk based on the
several steps, including a due diligence process
The second phase of the application process entails
BACK GROUND CHECK
D. DUE DILIGENCE/
BACKGROUND CHECK
The purpose of the visual application is to bring to life the
work of the nominee organisation, as well as to provide an
opportunity for girls within the organisation to be involved
in the application. Candidates are asked to submit three
photographs that represent their work along with a few
lines about each to describe what they are showing, why
they were taken and how they were captured. The photos
must be taken by a girl within the organisation and should
demonstrate the context of the programme and activities
important to the application. Some groups submit videos
instead. These visual applications are an important part of
what the girl panels review.
FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS
Evaluation interviewees, particularly girl panelists and
award winners, considered the visual application process a
great success. Some award winners have even adopted it as a means of communicating their
work beyond this process. For some nominees, girls’
involvement in the visual application allowed them
to work in a different way with their group. In some
cases, it also helped the group become more girl-
centred and create more leadership opportunities.
A few organisations however found the process of getting
good photos challenging due to the lack of good cameras
and photography skills, but nonetheless acknowledged it
as a wonderful non-traditional way to communicate their
work. Others said they would have wanted to hand in
more photos to properly showcase their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Improving the visual applications:
The Collective should consider increasing the
number of visuals that can be submitted to give
organisations more room to showcase their work,
though there should be a limit to the number
allowed so as not to disadvantage smaller groups
with less photographic capacity. It would also be
worth considering allowing other materials, such as
songs and drawings, to allow organisations that are
less tech savvy to feel more fairly included.
Ensuring more clarity in the application processes:
The Collective should consider providing a platform
for applicants to interact with members of the
Collective to help them better understand the award
application process. This could be done through a
webinar for the shortlisted nominees. Alternatively, it
could be devolved to the regional level where Referral
Partners can organise online meetings to explain the
process, the role of the girl-led panels, the criteria of
selection, the scorecard questions and any additional
questions, with back up support from the convenor.
Part of the training and orientation of the girl
panelists should make sure that the girls are well
acquainted with the organisations they will be
interviewing before the interviews.

RECOMMENDATIONS
It was a great process!
The girls especially loved it
as they were the ones who
took the pictures that were
submitted for the visual part
of the application.
(NIGEE, 2017 award winner)
A key feature of the award is the participation of girls throughout the process. Each year, judging panels composed entirely of adolescent girls (girl-led panels) choose the 20 winning organisations.

**FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS**

**Girls’ participation in decision-making.** The girl-led panels have been the most successful and exciting element of the award process. The Collective has created a girl-centred selection process, tailored to grassroots girls’ organisations and one that respects the knowledge and experiences of girls and young women.

By involving girls, the Collective is shunning traditional power dynamics that exist between donors and grantees and putting decision-making power firmly in the hands of adolescent girls and their organisations.

Girl panelists have demonstrated their ability to select winners, and shown much commitment and passion in doing so. By providing a well-defined framework of participation for the girl panelists, such as clear selection criteria and a detailed description of their role and responsibilities, while letting them decide on how to run the interviews, the Collective is investing in the leadership capacities of girls at the individual and organisational levels as well as contributing to movement building. One award manager commented on the girls’ decisions, stating:

Importantly, girl panelists’ engagement does not stop at the selection of the award winners. The Collective invites a representative from each panel to the awards ceremony at Awards Week. This has ensured continuity and helped sustain the quality of the panels.

Communication challenges. Communication is often a challenge and so are language barriers. Conducting interviews with applicants virtually is especially difficult when connecting to regions with poor internet. Other than the technical challenges, conducting a remote online interview is daunting even with support of the implementing partners.

**COMMUNICATION**

Communication with award winners and award managers: For groups that have communication as a perennial challenge, the Collective could consider supporting them to increase their internet bandwidth and improve web connectivity, or identify and install communication platforms that can host online meetings with ease. This could be done as part of the funds for capacity development provided to award winners.

**G. ENGAGEMENT WITH RUNNERS-UP**

The Collective provides tailored feedback to all applicants. This is rare, as many funders do not provide feedback to those that are not selected. As expected in such processes, the applicants who do not win receive the feedback with mixed feelings. Some appreciate the feedback and take it as a learning opportunity for improvement (including some that re-applied and went on to win the award), while others believe the feedback is not always fair or adequate.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Building on feedback mechanism: The Collective should consider building on the existing feedback mechanism to the runners-up in a number of ways. It could consider holding one-on-one calls with each of the applicants to provide feedback and explain what they could do differently if they were to re-apply. The Collective could also conduct a webinar open to all runners-up to offer feedback and explain the Collective model and award process. Another option would be to offer runners-up online capacity building sessions, where they could participate in their own time that could benefit future applications.

Ensure opportunity for re-application by unsuccessful applicants: Runners-up of previous awards are good potential candidates for re-application, seeing as they have gone through the entire process and passed all the eligibility criteria. The Collective should ensure that runners-up are invited to apply again, regardless of whether or not they were subsequently nominated by a Referral Partner.

Examples of runners-up who went on to win when they re-applied include Breeze of Hope from Bolivia and Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT) from India.

**WE PARTICIPATED IN THE WITH AND FOR GIRLS PROCESS BUT ULTIMATELY DID NOT WIN; WE (...) APPRECIATED THE FEEDBACK WE RECEIVED. THE [WFG PANEL] FELT THAT GIRLS THEMSELVES WERE NOT INVOLVED ENOUGH IN OUR GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING. AS A RESULT WE INVITED TWO YOUTH ADVOCATES TO JOIN OUR ADVISORY COMMITTEE. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THIS VALUABLE INSIGHT THAT HAS STRENGTHENED OUR ORGANISATION.**

Another said:

**WE STARTED APPLYING SINCE 2014 AND DID NOT GET IT BUT WE NEVER GOT TIRED OF APPLYING TILL WE GOT IT IN 2017. THE PROCESS HAS BECOME EASIER. WE THINK THE COLLECTIVE WAS TRYING TO GET AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE TO HELP IN DECISION-MAKING.**

**THE AWARD WAS A HUGE MORAL BOOST FOR US. WE WERE OVERJOYED BECAUSE LAST TIME WHEN WE HAD APPLIED FOR THE AWARD, THE GIRLS WERE REALLY HOPEFUL THAT THEY’D GET IT BUT UNFORTUNATELY DIDN’T WIN. THIS TIME WINNING THE AWARD MADE THE GIRLS CONFIDENT. GIRLS HAVE TAKEN SO MUCH OWNERSHIP THAT THE ENTIRE NARRATIVE AND STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION HAS CHANGED WHERE WE HAVE BECOME MORE GIRL-LED AND GIRL-CENTRED.**

Award winner (first time runner-up)
THE AWARD PACKAGE

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Level of funding: Generally, all award winners were satisfied with the level of funding they received, although understandably, many would like more or longer-term support. Some mentioned that receiving larger amounts might have been unmanageable. A number of interviewees discussed the option of the award being proportional to their yearly budget to make it fairer and easier to manage.

Flexibility of the funding and spending timeframe: There was widespread agreement among all interviewees that flexible funding is extremely valuable. In some cases, the girls themselves were able to decide on how they wanted to use the funds. This inclusive approach helped girls build and strengthen different capacities like leadership and management, as well as decision-making responsibility.

In particular, when reviewing the award package for 2016 for winners, the evaluation team was unable to find any reference to the funds having to be spent in two years. It is unclear if this was communicated later in the process or through any contracting steps taken.

“One-time” nature of the award. A range of views was expressed with regard to the one-time nature of the award. Some considered it appropriate, others expressed concern around the sustainability of the groups beyond the awards. Many award winners expressed the desire to receive additional funding or being able to compete again in future award processes.

The Collective has been discussing the limitations of providing a one-off award and the possibility of making multi-year funds available to award winners. Some of the responses from respondents also noted that most grassroots groups would say they would prefer consistent funding, even if for a shorter duration, than a one-time big award. The evaluation team considers that while having multi-year funding supports organisations in the long-term, the nature and personality of the current award system would need to be changed accordingly, and this would necessitate a deeper discussion about the nature of the award among Collective members.

It is clear to the evaluation team that it is not really accurate to refer to the award as “one-off,” given that the award package includes much more than just the prize money. In our view, this is partially a question of messaging. Additional efforts are needed to frame the full package differently and give more visibility to non-pecuniary elements, including the various forms of capacity development, the increases in credibility and visibility, the access to additional funding from the Strategic Partners and other donors, the networking and peer-to-peer learning and the access to communications and advocacy opportunities.

The award paves the way for more funding opportunities. It is clear that the award package has had a catalytic effect in providing further funding opportunities for many of the award winners. A review by the evaluation team of all reported additional funding secured by award winners, revealed more than US$1.5 million in extra funding had been leveraged. While much of the additional funds come from the members of the Collective, there are also new funders, including some at the national level. Awards Week seems to have been instrumental in providing space for relationship building. One awardee reported that they met two new funders during Awards Week, and spent a year building a relationship after which they received support for projects and development of their organisation.

Regardless of the outcome of their resource mobilisation efforts, many award winners said that the award has helped them gain credibility, which has given them more status when doing fundraising. Some said they now mention the award in their proposals (a practice that should be encouraged across the board). It is clear that the award in itself boosts the confidence of the winners, which helps them to be braver and bolder in their proposal writing and in their broader resource mobilisation efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarity and flexibility on the spending timeframe: If the Collective chooses to maintain the two-year spending limit, we recommend making this information clearer in all initial communications (and possibly in visual communication to runners-up as well). If the Collective decides to give more flexibility to the duration of the use, we recommend generally giving two years but accepting longer periods, upon approval or discussion with the Collective as it might have legal repercussions that the evaluation team is not aware of.

Enlarge and enrich the award package: The Collective could do more to consistently enrich and expand the award package by providing additional support materials, like a list of other potential awards and guidance on how to access them, or by outlining opportunities to fundraise with Strategic Partners or other relevant donors. An award winner mentioned that the award could also help provide other types of institutional support, such as digital security and leadership skills.

More robust learning, monitoring and evaluation: Having a more robust M&E system that better captures the impact of the award package would help support the Collective’s ability to make a stronger evidence-based case for the award, for the importance of flexible funding, and for the need to support girl-led efforts and girl leadership more generally. While a huge amount of data has been collected, there could be more analysis of this data to help extract clearer examples of impact. At present, it is not entirely clear to what extent the award sets the stage for larger pots of flexible funding in subsequent years.

Expand the award cycle, introduce secondary funding to award winners: Some have advocated for more focus on providing secondary funding to some of the award winners through new leveraging opportunities. If the Collective were to consider expanding the award cycle from one year to 18 months, for instance, or to build in a reflection year every four years, that year’s funding could be directed towards past winners to compete for a second award. This would serve several purposes: firstly, it would continue to build the Collective’s capacity as a learning organisation by building such reflection into its multi-year operations; it would also help to sustain communication with award winners and keep them motivated, and it would be a good way to showcase advances. In the longer-term, creating new timing for the award cycle could help to bolster the Collective’s communications and advocacy strategies.

In addition, the Collective might consider “pop-up funding” opportunities for the longer term support of past award winners.

THE AWARD WAS REALLY IMPORTANT FOR US BECAUSE IT WAS FLEXIBLE FUNDING. WE COULD USE THE FUND IN THE THINGS THAT WERE REALLY NECESSARY FOR US. THE FUNDING WAS NOT STRUCTURED, [...] AND GAVE US OPPORTUNITIES TO DO NEW THINGS.”

Award winner.

However, many award winners would have liked to see more flexibility in the timeframe given for spending the money. There were a number of organisations that did not spend the funds within the two-year timeframe. One organisation noted that “having to spend the funds in two years makes the award look like a two-year grant,” and might have contributed to some confusion about the status when doing fundraising. Some said they now mention the award in their proposals (a practice that should be encouraged across the board). It is clear that the award in itself boosts the confidence of the winners, which helps them to be braver and bolder in their proposal writing and in their broader resource mobilisation efforts.

The award paves the way for more funding opportunities with $1.95M in extra funding had been leveraged.
B. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The full scope of capacity development support, which responds to Strategic Objective/outcome area 3, can be organised into three categories: a) direct funding for individualised bespoke support (which is the only funding that is earmarked, the rest of the award funding is flexible); b) joint capacity development support (primarily through activities during Awards Week as well as through online workshops); and c) through the Community of Practice as peer learning.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Capacity Development Individualised Funding

This funding was given in addition to the award in the first and second years (2015 and 2016) to be used on capacity development activities, and was generally around US$8,000 per organisation. The Collective noted that these funds were generally “being used for bespoke support by award winners for consultancy, training courses and exchange visits.” It is not entirely clear to the evaluation team how the disbursement of these funds is organised, or if all organisations used it for capacity development or other purposes. For example, the breakdown of expenditure of capacity development for 2016 per organisation shows different total amounts for different organisations. Some of the funds were used for items like the design and text generation of a homepage or the purchase of office equipment such as a printer or a computer. While these are clearly critically important elements of a sustainable organisation, they would not be considered “capacity development” without a broad definition of the range of items these funds can support.

Many award winners found these funds instrumental while others found them difficult to use because of their particular phase of development, or found the funds insufficient.

One award winner commented,

Another award winner added to this sentiment,

RECOMMENDATIONS

Holding the capacity funds until later in the process: A recommendation made by a number of respondents was to hold the capacity development funds until year 3 as a “step down” or exit strategy. The evaluation team recommends giving the capacity development funds in the second year, since award winners will then have a better sense of their capacity gaps.

More training on girl-leadership: While training on girl leadership has been explicitly mentioned in Strategic Objective 3 as a core component of capacity development support, the evaluation team considers that insufficient effort has gone into mapping the contents of the capacity development support to meet this goal, and that any progress to this end has been largely collateral. More training could be developed on fostering girl-leadership, and, ideally, this should be available to both award winners as well as runners-up.

Flexibility and accountability in capacity development funds: It would be advisable to combine the self-assessment with more in-depth dialogues with the organisations to redefine the capacity development component of the package. Similarly, better guidance should be given to award winners on the use of capacity development funds. While it is unclear to the evaluation team how the approval of the funds for capacity development is currently done, we propose an added layer of communication to better understand the use of the funds and make sure these are used for capacity development activities.

Consider offering “off-the-beaten-track” support: The award package could include access to high-speed internet which seems to be an issue across the board. Better connectivity would support the award winners’ overall effectiveness and it could help sustain the online capacity development efforts of the Collective.

Simpler language in capacity development activities: Some of the award winners commented that some of the terminology used in some of the capacity development activities contained too much jargon. It would be beneficial to rethink both the materials and the types of delivery used in capacity development to be better adapted to grassroots organisations. It is also important to consider diversifying the languages used for capacity development support.

In-person is better: There was a general consensus that capacity development in-person is more effective than capacity development conducted online. Moreover, in-person sessions can also foster cross-organisational learning, including visits to other countries. The Collective could consider reducing the individual funds, which would free up funds that can go towards regional in-person capacity development support; or it could increase the overall funding going to this end. The Collective might also consider how to utilise the reach of its Strategic Partners and Referral Partners, many of whom have a wider network of offices in award winners’ countries and regions and might be brought on to help provide in-person sessions.

More capacity development for financial sustainability: Given the nature of the award, an important part of the capacity development package should be geared towards supporting organisations to become financially sustainable, most importantly around resource mobilisation. This was an area highlighted by many in their recommendations included in one of the previous Collective reviews.
C. AWARDS WEEK

The awards ceremony takes place in London during Awards Week, which also includes activities, workshops and networking events. It is hosted by the convener and all costs are covered by the Collective. Girl panelists are invited a day earlier to receive additional training. Awards Week is aimed at ensuring that winners learn about the Collective and their role in it and are clear about the requirements for their award. Award winners are celebrated during this week and gain significant press coverage. Through the various activities, they get to build their capacity in key areas identified through their assessment and they get the opportunity to network, share and learn from each other and leverage extra funding. During the week, Strategic Partners agree on changes moving forward. The Collective generally considers Awards Week a success if the above-mentioned aims are met.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Exceeding the objectives and fostering solidarity. Overall, evaluations show that the objectives of the week are mostly exceeded. In addition to the exposure the awards ceremony brings, award winners and girl panelists get to participate in relevant discussions, explore joint initiatives with other award winners and participate in a “speed dating” breakfast with donors as an important networking opportunity. In general, participants pointed to a great atmosphere and sense of community and solidarity among the participants.

Ensuring safeguarding. The team has also put a fair amount of effort into guaranteeing safeguarding, including reviewing some child safeguarding requirements, providing a refresher training to all key staff and a visitors’ agreement to all relevant suppliers (translators, trainers, other stakeholders) to follow when interacting with the girls during Awards Week.

Strengthening peer learning. A clear outcome of interviews with award winners was that while most appreciated the capacity development provided, some said it was somewhat top-down. Girls who were interviewed said that rather than just having sessions given by Collective members, they would have liked to hear more from other organisations.

Accurately estimating resources. Previous reviews, as well as conversations with staff members showed an under-estimation of resources needed (staff and cost) for organising Awards Week. Travel and translation budgets were exceeded on some years because the Collective was not aware of the cost of any guardians traveling with girls.

Improving visibility and media coverage during Awards Week. The external communications around Awards Week were reasonable, focusing on media in and around London. This could be strengthened with a significant infusion of funding to be effective, given that London has such a crowded media space. The evaluation team felt there were also missed opportunities in engaging with print and digital media in the countries where organisations are located.

Travel and logistical challenges. It is increasingly difficult to secure visas for girls, particularly when they are representatives of small grassroots organisations. Some of the award winners and girl panelists do not meet the financial requirements of the UK immigration authority (since they are often unpaid and do not have a formal contract of employment).

Limited participation of Collective members. Some respondents mentioned the limited participation of Strategic Partners during Awards Week, which is seen as a missed opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Extending the award cycle: If the Collective were to expand the award cycle to 18 months rather than one year, it would help all involved feel less overwhelmed. Additionally, the challenges encountered around the organisation of Awards Week would be also mitigated.

Ensure enough preparation time: We recommend the Collective ensure a minimum of three months between the, girl-led panels and Awards Week. It should define and communicate Awards Week dates (window of dates) at the beginning of the process. This will ensure better planning and better compliance with visa process requirements.

Explore the pros and cons of holding Awards Week in different locations: Given tightening visa requirements, it is worth considering holding Awards Week in alternative locations, including those where winners of that year are located, or in regional hubs with easier visa access, or in conjunction with advocacy moments (like during AWID or Women Deliver conferences). This might also stimulate the participation of some of the Strategic Partners.

Improving visibility and media coverage during Awards Week: We would recommend increasing visibility and international reach through the development of a stronger media strategy, which would include the possibility of working with high profile individuals or ambassadors (particularly those who are young girls). This should also include a social media strategy and a media package for all the winners to use at home, to complement the photography package they receive as part of the award. However, individual strategies should be designed to assess the adequate level of visibility for each winner so as to avoid potential harassment from authorities once they return home after Awards Week. Emphasis must be on the fact that it is an organisational award, rather than a personal award.

Strengthening peer learning: The evaluation team noted that none of the reports from Awards Week pointed to a desire to increase “areas where organisations could strengthen the capacity of others.” This could be planned in advance and embedded it into the week’s programme.

Timing the week carefully to add value to Strategic Partners’ attendance: Many Strategic Partners mentioned that their joint discussion time has not been sufficient. Timing Collective members meetings back to back with Awards Week would be a good way to achieve both higher representation and more discussion time.

Reviewing and communicating the objectives of Awards Week: While the objectives of Awards Week were outlined by the Collective, the specific details of each objective, beyond the awards ceremony, were not entirely clear to the evaluation team. It was also unclear if they were clearly communicated to the participants. It would be advisable to hold a session with the Strategic Partners to assess the aims of the week, align them better to the Strategic Objectives of the Collective, and communicate them better to participants.
The Collective considers raising award winners profiles a priority. Its visibility raising package includes a session with a professional photographer, after which each organisation receives a communication kit with photos, the With and For Girls logo, press releases and local press contacts. Winning organisations were given media coverage during and in the months following Awards Week through a range of different outlets including The Telegraph, Stylist and The Guardian, the Refinery 29, DIVA Magazine and the Verge. The Collective also facilitates girls’ organisations’ participation in international events such as the Girls Not Brides’ global meeting, Women Deliver and the Human Rights Funders Network. Sector-specific profiling has also taken place through Alliance magazine, Philanthropy Impact and Trust and Foundation News.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS
Visibility and profile raising. The evaluation team found evidence that profile raising efforts led to increased collaboration and funding. By increasing the visibility of the award winners, the Collective gives them a platform to amplify the voices of adolescent girls and to shine a light on great examples of grassroots girls organising. It also demonstrates to other donors that girl leaders are the ones who are best placed to improve girls’ rights and should be supported, directly and flexibly.

According to the reviews conducted by Stars, about half of the organisations reported an increase in their web traffic and media mentions (showing an overall increase in visibility) after winning the award. Around 80% of award winners saw an increase in references to their organisations in the media. Half of the award winners were able to leverage the award for additional funding.

Strategic Partners and profile raising. There is widespread agreement that Stars, as the convener’s sharing of due diligence data with a network of 65+ funding partners has enabled the award winners to leverage a further US $1.5m for their work. Receiving the award allowed the winners to leverage an additional nearly US$500,000 in 2016 and 2017 (no data was available for 2015). Overall, the awards have resulted in more attention to girl-led and girl-centred groups. The convener’s sharing of due diligence data with a network of 65+ funding partners has enabled the award winners to leverage a further US $1.5m for their work.

THE AWARD GAVE US MORE VISIBILITY BECAUSE OUR ORGANISATION WAS RECOGNISED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL THAT THEY ARE WORKING WITH GIRLS. IT HAS NOT ONLY OPENED DOORS FOR US FINANCIALLY BUT ALSO OPENED DOORS IN TERMS OF NETWORKING AND PARTNERSHIPS. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP NEW PARTNERSHIPS. AWARD WINNER

IT WAS THE FIRST AWARD WE EVER RECEIVED AS AN ORGANISATION. THE AWARD PUT THE ORGANISATION IN THE LIMELIGHT IN TERMS OF PUBLICITY. IT ALSO HELPED US TO CONNECT TO OTHER PARTNERS WHO HAD INTEREST IN THE AWARD. WE VALUE THE AWARD SO MUCH FOR IT HAS GIVEN US HIGH SELF-ESTEEM. AWARD WINNER

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Splashier, bolder, brighter and better funded media work: in line with the input collected through the interviews, the evaluation team thinks that much more could be done to raise the visibility of the Collective and the award winners to influence the donor community to support flexible funding for grassroots girl-led groups and girl leadership, with more time and resources and bolder campaigns. However, as mentioned earlier, individual strategies should be designed to assess the adequate level of visibility for winners so as to avoid potential harassment from authorities once they return home after Awards Week. Emphasis must be on the fact that it is an organisational award, rather than a personal award.

Stronger synergy with Strategic Partners around visibility: One suggestion is for more collaboration with Strategic Partners’ advocacy and communications departments to bring more visibility to award winners by reaching out to other donors and policymakers. This would help increase coverage in mainstream publications at the global, national and local levels during and after Awards Week. While the level of communication support varies depending on the award manager, longer-term communications support from the Collective/Strategic Partners could significantly boost the visibility of the award winners, and consequently, the resources available to them. Some of the grants from Strategic Partners to award winners could also be tailored to include this component.

Award winner-specific communications support: Several respondents noted that more could be done to help award winners present themselves and their issues in a stronger and more compelling way in order to access more funding. The experience of involving girls in the development of the visual application process gave girls an opportunity to talk about their work. This model could be used to support girls in documenting and sharing their stories. However, this would need a concerted effort to tailor the communications support on a case by case basis for each organisation, taking into account their context, history and current status, and by including girls in this effort.

Devoting more funding to profile raising: To support the Collective’s goals to enhance girl leadership worldwide, girls need to be given adequate representation at many more global, regional and national events, where Strategic Partners have connections. In addition, the Collective could devote more resources to inviting more girl participants from winning organisations to the awards ceremony, as well as to international events and conferences. However, it is worth noting that convening underage girls from across the globe is resource intensive and requires close attention to security and safeguarding.

Tighten the directions around the photography component: The photography component was well received by most award winners, however it is of critical importance to tighten the safeguarding mechanisms and ensure clear guidelines are given to the photographers so that they are portraying the girls in the most positive way.
AWARDS MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Awards management and ongoing communications.

An award recognises work that has already been done, while a grant is given for work that is yet to be completed. This distinction is not always clearly understood by all partners. An award, for instance, requires “light touch” management compared to the more intensive style of grants management that most Strategic Partners are used to. This raises some challenges in terms of collecting evidence of impact.

Time commitment. Strategic partners have said that the time commitment required for the management of the award was more than they had anticipated. They acknowledged that it was more difficult to estimate the level of input required at the start compared to other acknowledged that it was more difficult to estimate the level of input required at the start compared to other collectives they belong to. They had underestimated the time commitment required for the management of the award. Strategic partners have said that the time commitment required for the management of the award was more than they had anticipated. They acknowledged that it was more difficult to estimate the level of input required at the start compared to other collectives they belong to. They had underestimated the time commitment required for the management of the award.

Communication between award winners and award managers. Award managers are expected to be proactive in managing the relationship with the winners allocated to them. Award winners interviewed for this review expressed satisfaction with the level of communication they have had with the award managers, saying it was between frequent and moderate. They praised the fact that they were free to contact the award managers on a need-to-basis. Some said communication was regular, timely and responsive while others said they would prefer a more structured check-in on a monthly or quarterly basis. Some award managers have directed award winners to other funding or capacity building opportunities in and outside of the Collective. However, some communication challenges persist. For example, one of the interviewees reported that “Victoria Beckham went to see one of the award winners and we only found out through Instagram, which was a missed opportunity to boost the global media work.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consolidate data collection: The Collective has gathered so much data and possesses so many figures, but this data is not analysed adequately enough to form a body of evidence. We recommend a Collective-wide process to develop a stronger and more balanced method for gathering information from award winners that would be used to highlight the Collective’s impact. This could take many forms, such as but not limited to, surveys and interviews. The collected data should be analysed to extract information that tells a story. This would strengthen the Collective’s ability to make a strong case for more flexible funding to girl-led groups. Light touch management: Award managers give winners a free rein to determine the use of the funds but are always on hand when called upon. Because of the nature of the award, they do not want to subject the award winners to the same rigor or levels of scrutiny that they would normally apply to their institution’s grantees. Some award managers noted that they use a “light touch” with the Collective award winners, a clear distinction from the more intense engagement they have in grantmaking.

A communications resource/package: We recommend that the Collective create a resource/package of information for use by members of the Collective in their various engagements with award winners or other stakeholders to unify the messages about the awards. This would also help promote the Collective and expand its reach to potential award winners. It could also include guidance on the communications process to follow if there is staff turnover among award managers. These packages should be calibrated to the need, desires and stage of development of the award winners.

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The Collective has continuously sought ways to meaningfully involve adolescent girls (award winners and panellists) wherever possible beyond the award process. Inviting previous award winners to facilitate the girl-led panels has allowed winners to remain engaged even beyond their award. This also helps maintain quality and continuity of the panels because winners already have a clear understanding of the Collective’s mission and approach. Award winners are also invited to serve as Referral Partners, a process the evaluation team fully supports.

**Community of Practice.** The Collective aims to increase networking and collaboration, mostly through a Community of Practice, whose six objectives were defined through a consultative process with award winners. They are:

1. Sharing best practices and methodologies (tools and curriculum), specifically around the Collective’s work with girls.
2. Sharing resources and opportunities such as regional fundraising opportunities, networking and events, volunteer exchange opportunities for young women leaders, as well as publicising opportunities for pro-bono support.
3. Celebrating the work of the Collective and award winners and getting inspired.
4. Sharing data and information: exchanging information on what is happening in other regions and data on specific issues to support proposal writing by award winners.
5. Peer support to create a safe space to test ideas about projects, sharing information about tools, and getting Strategic Partners’ input on financial assessment.
6. To develop joint communications strategies or advocacy campaigns as well as generating more support for members’ advocacy campaigns.

While the CoP has been slow to launch, several other initiatives have commenced to support ongoing work with award winners, including:

- Workshops and informal networking activities during Awards Week which are organised for award winners to share and learn about each other’s work and experience as well as to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Following Awards Week, award winners were invited to join the With and For Girls Facebook group to share updates about their work but according to one of the interviewees, the effective participation of this group has been somewhat limited.
- Following Awards Week, participants were invited to join a Slack group where they could engage in more in-depth discussions including about joint training topics. The Slack group, however, did not take off. Renewed efforts are currently underway to form a community of practice through a collaboration with GirlSPARKS. This is a global training initiative, working with organisations and individuals to deliver more effective programming for adolescent girls through an experiential and tailored girl-centred design approach. The Collective has to date formed a working group of organisations working in similar spaces/on similar topics to help shape this girl-centred GirlSPARKS Community of Practice, to share resources, opportunities and practices.

In terms of results of this objective, reviews show that since winning the award, half of the organisations increased their collaboration with girl-centred organisations/networks and over half connected with another award winner. A large proportion however has had no contact with other winners or new girl-centred organisations. To help fix the weakness in the collaboration between award winners, the Collective launched two new funds in 2018, the Collaboration Fund and the Visibility and Action Fund.

**Other collaborations.** The Collective also collaborated with Project Everyone on International Day of the Girl in October 2017 to promote girl-led change in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The effort was endorsed by Beyoncé, who gave permission for the use of her song ‘Freedom’ in videos and materials aimed at raising awareness of the challenges disproportionately affecting girls worldwide. The Collective was also recently endorsed by actress Emma Watson as one of her ‘Partners’ in her mission to work towards a more gender equitable world.
We understand that most initial efforts of the Collective focused on the awards process and realise that working on collaboration between girls as stated in the Strategic Objective 4 is more difficult to achieve. However, promising efforts are underway, such as the Collaboration Fund. We consider this movement building work as having great potential and added value to the Collective.

While the six aims articulated for the CoP are clear, the Collective might want to spell each of them out in detail in order to come up with a more comprehensive and well-funded collaboration strategy.

In addition to having girls be the final judges of the awards, and attending Awards Week, the Collective has sought additional ways to bring girl panellists into Collective activities. This includes involving girls in developing the organisational strategy, and getting award winners to participate in key global women’s, girls’ and gender justice related events (Girls Not Brides global meeting, Human Rights Funders Network meeting, Elevate Children AGM, #MeToo and Philanthropy UK convening, etc.).

Another key way to involve the girls was through the evaluation process, during which girls worked hand in hand with the consultants. Trainings were also hosted for girls/peer evaluators in Nepal and Nairobi, and a focus group that comprised award winners, Referral Partners and unsuccessful applicants took place in Malaysia in July 2018.

Importantly, girl panellists’ engagement does not stop once they have picked the award winners. The Collective invites a representative from each panel to the awards ceremony and Awards Week.

**Recommendation:**

The Collective should consider increasing the participation of award winners and girl panellists, including creating a girl-led advisory panel or creating one or two slots in the CDB for award winners or girl panellists.
FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS
Growing area but in need of more voices. The data captured in the evaluation points to a recent expansion of the Collective’s work around advocacy and influencing. It is clear however that this work has mostly rested on the shoulders of the convener and that other Strategic Partners have been more silent or less vocal so far.

Referral Partners as advocates. According to some of the evaluation responses, it would be important to explicitly include Referral Partners in influencing and advocacy work, so as to speak with one voice. The referral partner network is a critical resource that could be involved and engaged beyond the referral system.

Going mainstream: The Collective has been expanding its communications work and its collaborations with celebrities which shows that the Collective is seizing the current global interest in supporting girls’ and women’s rights and helping move the cause into the mainstream. While this is clearly the right way forward, a bolder approach is encouraged.

Modelling a philanthropic approach on feminist human rights principles: On most indicators, the Collective rates highly on adopting feminist human rights principles. The Collective believes that it is important not only to support girl-led groups, but to also include girls in decision-making. It has built alliances with like-minded organisations with shared values and goals, which has meant that challenges have been dealt with constructively.

RECOMMENDATION:
Clearly the Collective has lessons to share with the broader community about how it practices feminist and rights-based philanthropy, such as innovative sourcing to find and fund lesser known and new organisations; success of their pooled funds structure; allowing the Collective to give awards to groups that each of the individual donors might consider too risky; and working solidly as a learning organisation, though there is much more work that could be done in this area. The modified consensus decision-making model also maximises the opportunities for learning among the Strategic Partners, influencing both the decisions of the Collective as well as bringing this learning back to their own organisations.
FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

In the short time since it launched, the Collective has defined itself as a solid collaborative group with shared values. There is a strong sense of balance and equal space among Strategic Partners, and that no one organisation is pushing its own agenda to the detriment of the shared values. In the words of one Strategic Partner “folks set aside their organisational ethos to a large extent. Not that there weren’t differences, but working this out has been enriching not divisive.”

As a result, there is a culture of trust, honesty and transparency in governance and management, which is also present in the discussions around selecting new members. There was wide appreciation for the Collective’s convener in taking on the lion’s share of the work in running a global awards programme and developing the capacity and raising the profile of award winners - including the relatively hidden tasks of managing the budget, understanding the complex legal requirements involved in cross-border giving to multiple countries, and even simply scheduling calls with attendees across a nine-hour time difference. In sum, Collective members and staff are extremely proud of and committed to the work that the Collective is doing and the way it is structured. This was summed up by one staff member who explained “We are a Collective in what we do, the way we think, the way we take decisions, our values, the goals are shared across the group.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Time management of Strategic Partners: It is imperative that Strategic Partners plan for the fact that working collaboratively takes more time than working alone. They need to factor this time into their commitment and appropriately resource this within their own organisations, including with their engagement in working groups. The evaluation team considers the new decision to create different tiers of membership very adequate. Overall, the Strategic Partners do not want to exclude new donors or partners. We recommend that the Collective clearly articulate, as part of the criteria for bringing on new Strategic Partners, the element of shared principles, values and ways of working (as per Strategic Objective 4).

Adding a fifth Strategic Objective: The evaluation team considers the Collective’s four Strategic Objectives to be adequate; however, we believe that the Collective should consider the inclusion of a 5th Strategic Objective to resolve the previously mentioned lack of information and documentation on the needs and resources of girl-led and girl-centred groups. We recommend that the Collective consider adding a 5th outcome on building and generating knowledge and evidence on the resource needs of girls, and on the available financing for girl-led groups as well as other information linked to the work of girl-led organisations.
The Collective has proven to be among the most relevant, effective and fast-growing entities to bring resources and attention to grassroots girl-led and girl-centred groups. It has fully operated three award rounds in its first three years of existence providing a robust award package to a wide range of global award winners which is, in itself, an impressive achievement by any measure. In this short time, the awards have already helped to increase recognition and resources available to girl-led and girl-centred organisations. The Collective’s ability to operate on a consensus basis with maximum participation from the Strategic Partners has generated a highly functioning and highly regarded body.

The Collective has made connections with wider women’s and girls’ organisations and philanthropic communities, putting the impressive and innovative work of girl-led and girl-centred groups in the spotlight. This has not gone unnoticed in the donor community, with the Collective regularly being referenced in publications and case studies. The Collective, together with its Strategic Partners FRIDA - The Young Feminist Fund and Mama Cash, were asked to nominate girls for Teen Vogue’s 21 girls and femmes under the age of 21 who are inciting positive change in the world. They nominated eight girls from With and For Girls award-winning organisations. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors has also featured the Collective’s work as a case study in a recent report: Scaling Solutions and Shifting Systems: The Power of Collaboration, 2018.

One of the key achievements of the Collective is that it has created a process that is as important as the award itself. The Collective, and Stars Foundation specifically, has put enormous efforts into adapting to each of the grassroots organisations by personalising every email, making sure to provide feedback and expanding the languages of communication. While this requires additional resources, it has created a culture of trust and camaraderie that is distinctive.

As well as the award itself, including the capacity building support, winners have been able to leverage at least US$700,000 in additional funding since the awards’ inception. Awards Week in London has also been instrumental in boosting visibility around the awards. The Collective has also done remarkable work in communications and influencing through various platforms including media and events like Trust Women, Women Deliver, the Global Goals campaigns and others.

The existence of the Collective and the With and For Girls Award reflects and helps advance changing donor practices, especially given the diversity of Collective members and the growing number of individual donors and philanthropic institutions that have expressed interest in joining. They look to the Collective for advice and learning, and the work of the Collective – including the role of girls as leaders and the importance of flexible funding – is receiving increased attention in the philanthropic sector.

For all the great work done by the Collective, there is still room to strengthen and scale its model.

To boost its philanthropic approach, The Collective should consider incorporating girls in its governance structures. This can start off with the creation of a girls’ participation advisory working group that would let girls advise on how best to meaningfully be involved in governance, decision-making and activities of the Collective.

The interchangeable use of the terms girl-led and girl-centred reflects the lack of a strict accepted definition of both those terms and points to the fact that truly-girl led groups are very difficult to find. There needs to be a discussion with the broad community working in the field to agree on definitions, while also approaching the issue with some flexibility in contexts where girls are unable to take on leadership positions for either legal or cultural reasons.

The Collective has a vast amount of rich data that could be mined to analyse trends, risks and impact to better inform decision-making on funding needs. Together with a mapping of the state of funding for girl-led and girl-centred organisations, this will help build the foundations of a more equitable and inclusive development model.
To reach a wider network of girl-led and girl-centred organisations, the Collective should lead the way in getting funders to consider lowering their income thresholds, opening up their process to more languages and providing support during the application processes to those who need it. Without the utmost effort in these areas, smaller groups risk being locked out of the process.

The Collective has taken exceptional steps in providing tailored feedback to all its applicants and this is a highly commendable step that has helped individual organisations improve their processes and develop. This could be taken even further by putting in place a mechanism to ensure that runners-up from previous years are invited to re-apply for the award, even if a Referral Partner has not subsequently nominated them.

The Collective is a special group that is uniting and engaging a growing community of participatory grantmakers. It is uniquely placed to leverage data and insights on this sector, foster cross-learning and collaboration and guide policy and advocacy work.

The coming years should be used to explore and share innovative and diverse funding models and experiments that have the potential to not only fund local activists but also change power dynamics around them. The Collective should lead the way in getting funders to consider lowering their income thresholds, opening up their process to more languages and providing support during the application processes to those who need it.

The evaluation is underpinned by feminist and human rights research principles of participation, transparency, accountability, inclusion and non-discrimination, including sensitivity to the unique characteristics of engaging in a learning process with girls. The evaluation uses an assessment model that looks at the Collective’s structure, process and outcomes. Under structure, we reviewed the Collective inputs (human, finance, technical and information) that have been deployed by the Collective toward supporting girl-led programming and leadership. In assessing the outcomes, we examined the results of the key Strategic Objectives as outlined in the With and For Girls Collective’s theory of change and results framework.

**AREAS OF INQUIRY OF THE EVALUATION**

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the Collective had achieved results on the seven areas of inquiry and identified changes or recommendations around them. The consultants reviewed the extent to which the Strategic Objectives were met, adequacy of the award package (including evaluating the appropriateness of the level of support, the length of the time to use the award and the capacity development support). They also assessed the adequacy of the level of support given to award winners by award managers, the extent to which the award process maximised learning for both award winners and runners-up as well as how the Collective is maximising girls’ participation. The added value of the donor collaborative was a subject of inquiry as well as whether the collaborative approach and the award package match the needs of girl-led and girl-centred groups globally and how they might be better adapted. The review also focussed on what the key lessons are that can be used to influence philanthropy to increase visibility and flexible resources to girl-led and girl-centred organisations.

**PROCESS**

In order to answer these questions, the evaluation team used a mixed methods methodology, which included:

1. An extensive desk review of Collective materials, including information about the Collective, the award process, awards management, the Strategic Objectives, and monitoring and evaluation. This was greatly facilitated by the Collective’s practice of regular data collection for reflection and learning.
2. A literature review to draw out best practices in participatory grantmaking and feminist grantmaking principles.
3. 30 consultant-led semi-structured interviews with Collective staff, Strategic Partners, implementing partners, award winners, girl panelists and key respondents.
4. 34 girl-led interviews of award winners.
5. Two focus group discussions (one with award winners and one with runners-up attending the Girls Not Brides Global Conference in June, 2018).
7. A review of key findings by the girl interviewers, as well as Collective members.

The evaluation team (Susana Fried, Maria Bordallo and Anne Gathumbi, with support from Rhon Reynolds) looked across these different data to find common themes, trends and lessons. Data analysis emphasised both the details of the award process (referrals, applications, 2-stage review, girls’ engagement), launching and ongoing support for award winners (Awards Week, capacity development, raising visibility, fund leveraging) and the functionality of the Collective itself to achieve its Strategic Objectives. A strong emphasis was put in communicating the recommendations and lessons learnt in a way that would be beneficial not only to the Collective but also for the larger philanthropic sector and the global community of girl-led and girl-centred groups.