

INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

A learning brief

October 2022



Honouring the work

This brief is feminist and intergenerational as it was co-developed by feminists representing their organizations from across generations. It is based on the lived experiences and realities of young feminist networks, United Nations agencies and organizations. Feminist principles guided the process of this brief and resulted in a global community of solidarity. In true intergenerational fashion, a brave space was created for meaningful contributions from feminists of all ages, and resources were available to support their participation.

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Notes on use:

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Origins of this learning brief

This learning brief captures the outcomes of the ‘Meaningful Youth Engagement’ webinar held in December 2021, as part of a [learning series](#) dedicated to exploring and documenting meaningful youth engagement in practice. The webinar was convened by a diverse group of partners including Generation Unlimited (GenU), Transform Education/United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), Nalafem (NalaFem), Afresist and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

These partners share a common interest and commitment to intergenerational partnership to achieve transformative change for girls’ education and gender equality. During the webinar, participants shared experiences from their own recent endeavours, highlighting the positive outcomes and lessons learned from different approaches to meaningful intergenerational partnerships. Explored through the lense of youth-led organizations and partner organizations and a series of case studies, this learning brief captures the reflections, lessons and common themes that emerged through the webinar.

Based on these findings, a number of anchoring principles are proposed. We hope these can serve to guide youth practitioners, civil society and non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, donors, research institutions, technical experts and young people themselves in calling for and co-designing sustainable, equitable, meaningful and transformative intergenerational partnerships.



The webinar partners

Generation Unlimited. Anchored in UNICEF, Generation Unlimited is a public-private-youth partnership that supports global innovations at a large scale to help young people gain the skills they need to lead a productive and fulfilling life. Its young leadership has become fully embedded and integrated across all decision-making functions. This approach relies heavily on robust and meaningful intergenerational relations across the partnership.

UNGEI is a global, multi-stakeholder, intergenerational partnership and platform for gender equality in and through education. The only intergovernmental entity with this mandate, UNGEI catalyzes action locally and globally for girls' education and gender equality in education. A critical aspect of UNGEI's mandate is to convene and elevate national and grassroots actors. Through its Global Advisory Committee, UNGEI brings together national, regional and global experts to build global momentum for girls' education and gender equality around the world. UNGEI also hosts Transform Education, a global network of young, feminist activists for education equality. UNGEI recently launched the [Global Feminist Coalition for Gender Transformative Education](#), which is an intergenerational group of 33 civil society organizations and feminist activists.

NalaFem is guided by the [Africa Young Women Beijing +25 Manifesto](#) which was developed through a series of consultations with young African women and handed over during the Africa Young Women Beijing+25 High-Level Intergenerational Dialogue. NalaFEM focuses on bridging the gap between generational spaces and has acquired experience in creating and sustaining intergenerational feminist spaces and aims at sharing the learnings from this journey.

Afresist is a millennial-led ecosystem working throughout Africa since 2019 to develop innovative leadership models, train the next generation of peacebuilders and promote public policies based on the principles of Pan-Africanism. Afresist hosts the Intergenerational Africa Forum, a gathering of seven generations whose mission is to support young people's struggles and contribute to building global and pan-African communities around local youth-led causes. The Intergenerational Africa Forum is about powering change. It embraces the principle of non-violence and the rights of indigenous communities to their development goals, and promotes environmental, gender, sexual, social and economic justice.

WAGGGS is the largest voluntary movement dedicated to empowering girls and young women in the world. For the past four years, young women have been leading the change in advocating for their formal representation within governance structures across the Girl Guides and Girl Scouting movement. Through this process of reform, intergenerational partnerships between senior leaders and young women emerged as a crucial component to their eventual success.

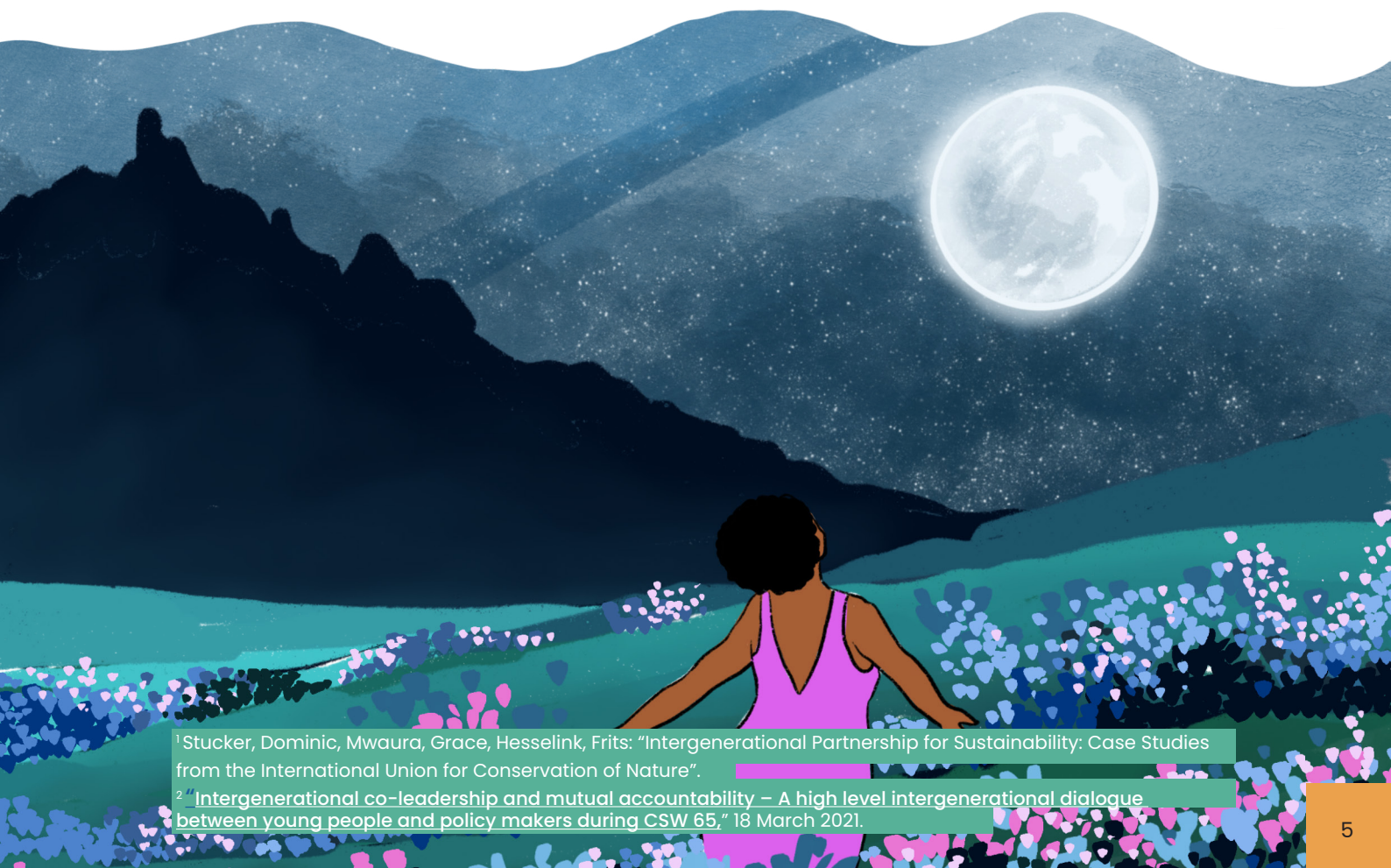
Transform Education is a feminist youth led coalition for gender equality in education around the world. Launched in 2019 and hosted by UNGEI, Transform Education takes a feminist, intergenerational and intersectional approach to its work, and positions young feminist activists and organizations as essential partners in transforming education systems for gender equality. It is the first coalition of its kind in the global education sector.

Introduction

Intergenerational partnerships are increasingly turned to as a means for addressing some of the biggest challenges young people face – from the climate crisis to achieving gender equality. Institutions and organizations are making space for young people and youth-led organizations through the establishment of youth committees and advisory boards and other consultative youth engagement mechanisms.

The practice of meaningful youth engagement has often been linked to intergenerational partnerships.¹ Organizations seeking to provide space for young people to be actively involved in the design and implementation of programmes and policies are engaging in multigenerational partnerships by default. The crux of these relationships revolves around a common power structure: between those that have the resources, decision-making authority and power (adults and larger, well-resourced institutions and organizations, often based in the global North) and those who often do not (youth and youth-led organizations, often operating and originating in the global South).

The success of these initiatives depends upon the redistribution of power, resources and, often, a collective re-design of existing processes and institutions. It also requires a reimagining of young people's roles from mere participation, towards sharing positions of influence where they have the resources, recognition and power to generate transformative change.² This learning brief presents five anchoring principles for meaningful intergenerational partnership (see box). Explored through a series of case studies and the experiences of youth-led and partner organizations, these anchoring principles offer concrete, actionable examples that can be adopted for meaningful intergenerational partnership.



¹Stucker, Dominic, Mwaaura, Grace, Hesselink, Frits: "Intergenerational Partnership for Sustainability: Case Studies from the International Union for Conservation of Nature".

²"Intergenerational co-leadership and mutual accountability – A high level intergenerational dialogue between young people and policy makers during CSW 65," 18 March 2021.

Anchoring principles for meaningful intergenerational partnerships

1. Formal and Institutionalized representation

Young people need more than a seat at the table; they need formal, institutionalized representation. This means that youth are full and equal members of organizations, institutions and decision-making or governing bodies and fully and actively participate. This includes ensuring they have opportunities to take up space and speak, and that underrepresented youth groups, such as those within Northern native communities, North Asia and the Global South, are prioritized. The adoption of quotas and other formal youth engagement mechanisms can be both a symbolic and meaningful shift, but only when it is backed by institutional commitment and resources.



2. Safe, intergenerational spaces to overcome stereotypes and promote healing

Confronting inherent biases held by all generations can be a meaningful first step in the collaborative space. When set up intentionally, safe, intergenerational spaces, such as [Solidarity Circles](#), can serve as vital building blocks in establishing mutual understanding and empathy and identifying areas for joint action. These spaces must also acknowledge the intersectional nature of power structures in order to dismantle them, including with regards to age, postcolonialism, race, disability and gender.



3. Meaningful dialogue between older and younger generations

Creating a conducive and safe environment for mutual learning and exchange underpins meaningful, intergenerational dialogue. To be inclusive of diverse backgrounds, dialogues can be shaped around the group's needs and preferences for self-expression and can include storytelling, art and circle based conversation, as examples.



4. Genuine co-ownership and co-leadership

For genuine co-ownership or co-leadership to take root, it's important to identify, along with youth partners, the institutional or cultural barriers that prohibit genuine co-leadership. Co-creating new decision-making processes to replace those that are inherently hierarchical or adult-centric can help to fully embed and Institutionalize principles of equality and shared power, transparency and accountability.



5. Resources must underpin fully fledged co-leadership

If solidarity is to turn into action, young people, and especially young feminist activists, must be adequately supported with financial and non-financial resources. Organizations or institutions partnering with youth-led groups must be willing to commit themselves financially to their success. Ensuring that future generations are resourced to take forward the collective efforts of generations is in itself an intergenerational, transformative and [power-shifting act](#).



What do we mean by intergenerational partnerships?

Intergenerational partnerships are widely referenced but are often left undefined. Generally, they can refer to older and younger generations working together in pursuit of change or a set of common goals. Feminist principles of power-sharing, mutual respect and knowledge sharing are some of the words often described as underpinning meaningful intergenerational partnerships. At their core, intergenerational partnerships are borne out of the recognition of the interdependency of older and younger generations, and the distinct and valuable knowledge, perspectives and resources that each generation brings to their joint endeavour.³

Discussion and case studies related to each of the five anchoring principles

1. Formal and institutionalized representation

Young people need more than a seat at the table; they need formal, institutionalized representation. This can mean quotas in governance (e.g., a Board or Advisory Committee that is 25 per cent youth) or strategic roles in decision-making structures. To ensure that the partnership is equal and mutually beneficial, it is crucial that traditional power structures are altered to include and involve young people at all levels of decision-making.

NalaFem

NalaFem calls specifically for the institutionalization of young women's co-leadership. Recognizing young women's current absence from decision-making positions, they call for the adoption of quotas and mandated representation in technocratic positions and Special Advisors/Envoys at every level of national, regional and global governance, as a necessary prerequisite to full and effective political participation and equal opportunity access.

WAGGGS

Recent research undertaken by WAGGGS sets out to map examples across the movement where young women had been successful in obtaining board positions to see what lessons could be drawn and to demonstrate young women's leadership potential. The process revealed that where young women had obtained leadership positions, it was often down to strong intergenerational relationships and allyship between a young woman and a senior leader on a board or committee who personally advocated on behalf of the young woman candidate. The case studies demonstrated what was possible when young women received support from their Board. But they also underscored the need for movement-wide policies and institutional mechanisms to ensure that there were pathways available to all young women.

³[The Youth-Friendly Guide to Intergenerational Decision Making Partnerships \(2004\), https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2061_citpart_youth_010104_5.pdf.](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2061_citpart_youth_010104_5.pdf)

GenU

GenU, a public-private-youth partnership, reserves seats for young representatives in its governing bodies, such as the Global Leadership Council and Board. Through their formal representation, young leaders are able to work in collaboration with experts and global leaders to influence key programming and strategic decisions at the global level. In practice, youth-empowered impact means better decisions and increased efficiency. Young people's unique body of knowledge about their lives, their needs and their concerns can lead to more relevant and sustainable decisions on programming. Institutionalized governing roles also provide young people with the opportunity to develop leadership skills and build their personal and professional networks.

For example, Andrea de Remes is a young woman from Mexico recently elected to the Global Leadership Council. She founded and runs a start-up focused on removing barriers to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education for young people, especially young girls. Andrea is a young feminist who brings a critical lens to GenU's conversations and decisions about young people's empowerment and participation. Recently, Andrea joined the first yearly meeting of the Global Leadership Council along with GenU's other private and public sector partners. She contributed her knowledge and perspective about closing the "youth skills gap" among a group that included the executive director of UNICEF and chair of the GenU board. Andrea's participation exemplifies GenU's intergenerational, public-private-youth partnership strategy: elevating youth voices, empowering youth action, and making space for youth leadership.

UNGEI

In order for UNGEI to become an intergenerational partnership and to truly shift the power, it was imperative that young feminist networks were embedded within UNGEI's governance structure. UNGEI's Steering Committee (similar to a board structure) includes a young feminist network, and several young feminist networks are members of UNGEI's Global Advisory Committee of 40+ organizations. The terms of the partnership include offering compensation and resources to support their participation, time and connectivity needs. By ensuring meaningful representation within UNGEI's decision-making and advisory bodies, the partnership was able to begin dismantling deep power dynamics that are often rooted within United Nations entities and international organizations. Through their expertise and experience, young feminist networks have been adding significant value to the partnership and have played key roles in influencing programming decisions.

The active participation of young feminist networks within UNGEI has resonated deeply with partners globally, alongside growing recognition that young people must be a part of discussions and decisions that directly impact their education and rights. Young people have demonstrated their ability to successfully advocate for and bring about change. UNGEI's commitment to institutionalized representation centres on the fact that bringing young feminist activists, United Nations agencies, non-profit organizations, governments and other key stakeholders and duty bearers together as partners is necessary to achieve sustainable and long-term action towards gender equality in and through education.

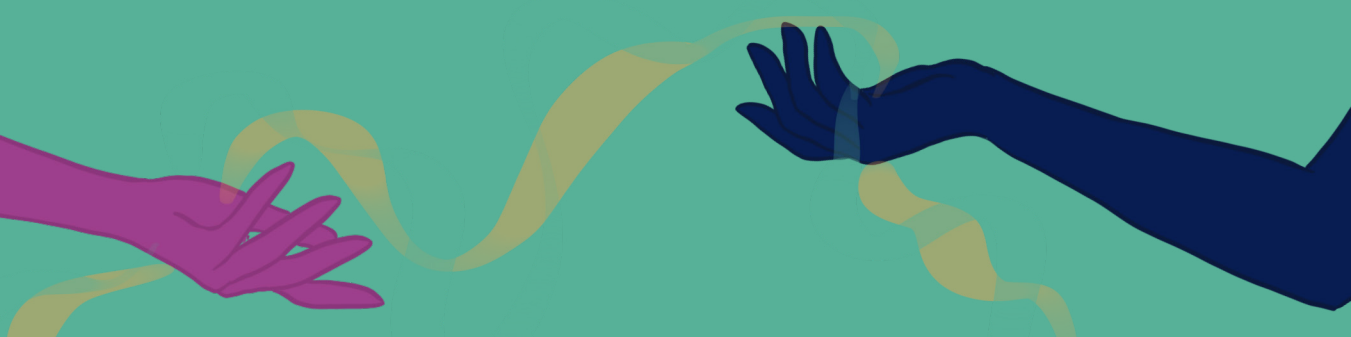
Young Women's Research Team — WAGGGS

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts represents a one hundred-year-old movement of women, young women and girls. Intergenerational partnerships are part of its very fabric, ensuring that the movement continues to grow and thrive. When a girl first joins a troop or unit, women leaders support girls to build new skills and to practice their own leadership. When young women decide to stand for leadership positions, it is women leaders who endorse their candidacy.

This process is replicated at every level of governance across the organization. There is a strong commitment to intergenerational partnerships across the Girl Guide/Girl Scout movement with 98 per cent of those members surveyed believing that young women should be represented in leadership and that this not only benefits young women themselves, but also the wider movement. However, despite this strong sentiment, it was still found that many young women struggle to obtain positions of leadership across all decision-making structures.

During the WAGGGS 36th Global Conference, a motion was passed that instigated research into why more young women were not standing for governance positions. A team of young women researchers (YWRT) that represented every region was formed to carry out the necessary research and provide recommendations for improving this lack of diversity within all governance levels. The research identified a number of barriers experienced by young women, including: lack of awareness on decision-making role opportunities (reported by 60 percent of participants), followed by imposter syndrome (57 percent) and lack of time (57 percent). The team concluded that more action was needed to ensure that decisionmaking roles were attainable, attractive and beneficial for young women and the Girl Guides and Girl Scouting movement.

One year on from the 36th Global Conference where this research was launched, the sustained advocacy of the Young Women's Research Team led to the passing of a motion for a quota that requires the World Board and Regional Committees to include at least two members under the age of 30. The success of this youth-led process can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the organizational commitment made by WAGGGS to resource this youth-led process and secondly, the grassroots approach. The Young Women's Research Team engaged young women and their leaders across the movement in every step of the research process. This helped generate momentum so that when it came time to vote for motions supporting increased representation of young women in leadership positions, there was already wide support and familiarity with the motions being put forward. While a crucial next step is driving the implementation of these commitments, the research process itself and the discussions that were generated across the movement have already led to more young women participating in their National Boards and standing for the World Board.



2. Intergenerational spaces to overcome stereotypes and promote healing

Intergenerational spaces bring together different generations for meaningful dialogue. In these spaces, it's important that there is a mutual goal to shift power, share learning and practice non-judgement. Informal spaces in particular can serve as vital building blocks in establishing mutual understanding and identifying areas for joint action. When set up intentionally, they can help to overcome unequal power structures, age- and power-based stereotypes and misconceptions. In some instances, it may be necessary to confront inherent biases held by both generations before meaningful collaboration can take place. Intergenerational spaces that acknowledge the intersectionality of power structures, including based on post-colonialism, race, gender and ability, are also crucial to promote healing, decolonize development and ensure an intersectional, feminist approach is taken to meaningful intergenerational partnerships.

As Rahel from Afresist explains, many mainstream global narratives have fostered animosity between and across generations. In Africa for example, a common narrative is perpetuated that older generations have failed younger generations. To address this, physical spaces were intentionally created for elders to openly share their perspectives, allowing for young activists to connect with their history, to raise grievances and to enable deeper understanding and empathy.



Solidarity Circles — Transform Education and UNGEI

Globally, more than half of the world's children — up to one billion girls and boys — have experienced violence in the past year, and much of that violence occurs in and around schools.⁴ Many learners, as a result of the prevailing norms and attitudes in their societies, may be conditioned to normalize instances of school-related gender-based violence as a 'part of life' or be actively silenced, and may not have had a safe space to tell their story and be heard. Safe spaces which bring students and young people together can contribute to creating a sense of belonging, collective healing and action.

Solidarity Circles are one such informal, safe space or gathering. Brave, safe and inclusive discussions take place in a circle, where everyone is seated at the same level. Solidarity circles are for learners, teachers and members of organizations that are working towards creating safe schools. They are spaces for all intersections of identities, with shared and feminist values around equality, respect, kindness and collective action.

During the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence in 2021, [the Solidarity Circle: A Feminist Facilitator's Guide](#) to *Creating a Safe Space for Young People* was launched by UNGEI, the Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence and Transform Education . The guide aims to inspire and offer guidance to teachers, organizations and activists of all ages to come together and have open and honest discussions of feminism, gender, education and violence. The facilitators' guide draws on the power of local, intergenerational organization, action and collaboration, and puts wellbeing and solidarity at the centre of discussions.

In the context of school-related gender-based violence, Solidarity Circles have proven to be powerful spaces for young people that have experienced violence to share their experiences with adult duty bearers. Where policy responses to school-related gender-based violence might traditionally prioritize reporting mechanisms and accountability of perpetrators, young people have valued intergenerational dialogues as an important step in their healing process.



⁴ Hillis, S., et al., Global Prevalence of Past-year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates. *Pediatrics*, 2016. 137(3): p. e20154079; Devries, K., et al., Who perpetrates violence against children? A systematic analysis of age and sex specific data. *BMJ Pediatrics*, 2018. 2: p. e000180.

3. Meaningful dialogue between older and younger generations

Dialogue is an important step in the process towards partnership and creating a conducive and safe environment is vital to bringing about meaningful, intergenerational dialogue. To be inclusive of diverse backgrounds, dialogues can be shaped around the group's needs and preferences for self-expression and can include storytelling, art and circle-based conversation, among other techniques. Creating space for mutual knowledge sharing, as opposed to 'mentoring,' recognizes that both younger and older generations can learn from these exchanges.

This was a key lesson UNGEI learned in light of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Amid school shut-downs and fears of increased gender-based violence around the world, UNGEI responded to calls from grassroots young feminist activists, organizations and networks about the lack of youth representation in global policy dialogues and debates. Over the course of a month, UNGEI facilitated [three intergenerational dialogues](#) with leaders from UNICEF, Plan International, the Global Partnership for Education, the United Kingdom Government and young feminist activists representing displaced and crisis-affected youth communities and feminist youth-led networks, including Afrika Youth Movement, CYGEN and Transform Education. The dialogues introduced a new format of mutual learning and exchange among actors. By breaking down the traditional panel or webinar structure that often separates elder leaders and youth leaders, the intergenerational dialogues encouraged open, authentic exchange of perspectives, knowledge and demands for action. The success of the intergenerational dialogues, from the perspective of both young feminists and elder participants, has resulted in this format being replicated by major global education actors, organizations and institutions.

Based on this series of intergenerational dialogues, UNGEI facilitated the publication of a youth-led policy brief, [In Solidarity With Girls: Gender and education in crisis](#). Co-created by the young feminists who led the dialogues, the brief comprises young people's experiences of education during Covid-19, programmes and activism to promote girls' education and gender equality during the crisis and recommendations relating to gender-responsive school reopenings. Examples of recommendations are: (1) to provide incentives to families at the time of reopening to support marginalized learners, particularly girls, to return to school, and remove policies that discriminate against pregnant girls and young mothers; and (2) to mobilize and support youth-led organizations and networks to deliver "back to school" campaigns, facilitate information-sharing seminars and raise community awareness on issues, including period poverty, child marriage, early pregnancy and other key barriers to girls' education.

This series and requisite brief highlighted the importance of partnering with young feminist organizations on the issues they are actively working on in a way that goes beyond mere consultation. Involving young feminists in the dialogues around gender-responsive school reopenings lead to a heightened understanding – and subsequent response to – the issues facing girls and young women impacted by the pandemic. The experiences and recommendations of the young feminist activists were featured, for example, in the [Building back equal: Girls back to school guide](#), a practical guidance document for education ministers and practitioners to ensure girls' safe return to school post pandemic.

“We need to understand the value of young people because wherever there's empathy there's more progress.”

Laraib Abid, GenU Young People's Action Team member

Case study 03

Intergenerational Accountability Dialogues — NalaFem

Among its ten demands, the Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Manifesto calls for intergenerational co-leadership with a focus on the institutionalization of co-leadership for young women's full and effective political participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels. Intergenerational co-leadership as a practice should establish sustainable intergenerational dialogue platforms. These strengthen Pan-African networks of young and senior women for generational learning, sharing, mentoring, inclusive solidarity and empowerment. Carrying on this principle, NalaFem organized six [Intergenerational Dialogues](#) for Accountability between August and September 2021 in six African countries that are members of the Generational Equality Action Coalitions, namely Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tunisia and South Africa.

The Intergenerational Dialogues for Accountability brought together youth organizations, civil society actors and government representatives to discuss advocacy about the commitments made by their respective countries to the Generation Equality platform. NalaFem supported the implementation of Action Coalition committees to action these dialogues, with the objective of creating public debate and centring the commitments in the gender agenda narrative. NalaFem also funded youth-led organizations and collectives to host the Intergenerational Dialogues for Accountability, namely the Centre for Socio Economic Transformation (South Africa), For Equality (Malawi), Jssor Youth Organisation (Tunisia), Femin-In (Burkina Faso), and Saye Company (Rwanda).

These dialogues led to raising awareness not only of Action Coalition committees, but of the importance and healing power brought forth by meaningful dialogue. Older generations were able to share their perspectives and journeys and young people were empowered as drivers of advocacy and accountability processes. The practice of intergenerational dialogue has also ensured the engagement of stakeholders through building a platform from global conversation to national engagement by bridging together Action Coalition committees, African member states, civil society and youth.



4. Spaces must be co-owned and co-led

It is important to highlight that a reserved position on a Board or Committee does not necessarily translate to meaningful youth participation or genuine co-leadership. Where entrenched hierarchical decision-making structures or a culture of adultism prevails, this can easily slip into tokenism.

Clearly defining the young person's role and articulating the mutual accountabilities to those in power are some important prerequisites. It is important to be intentional about shifting power and to consciously address cultural norms or barriers that may hinder co-leadership. A full co-creation process that is underpinned by principles of transparency, accountability and power-sharing can help to establish genuine partnerships between older and younger generations.



5. Resources must underpin fully-fledged co-leadership

Meaningful intergenerational partnerships involve a sharing of knowledge, experience and time. This solidarity is the bedrock of a fruitful partnership, but it can't stop there. Youth-led organizations, especially young feminist organizations, must be adequately supported with financial and non-financial resources if solidarity is to turn into action. This serves multiple purposes: funding young people signals that their efforts and contributions are valued to the same degree as the partners they are working with, and it serves to address inequalities between partners in power or resources. It can also help to enable a thriving youth civil society.⁵ Fully-funded partnerships and engagements also allow youth-led groups and movements to expand their reach and enable the sustainability of their organizations.

Resources for intergenerational partnership can vary according to the scale of the project. For example, small amounts of funding for data packages, safe transport to internet cafes, stipends for professional clothing or memorandums can ensure young people's contributions to shared documents, or participation in online meetings and events are supported and sustainable. [Non-financial compensation](#), such as access to training opportunities, are also important. For a large-scale partnership, the youth-led organization needs the opportunity to share their budget for their deliverables. This can also include non-financial support, including capacity growing training that responds to the young feminists needs, e.g., workshops on leadership, finance and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, etc.⁶

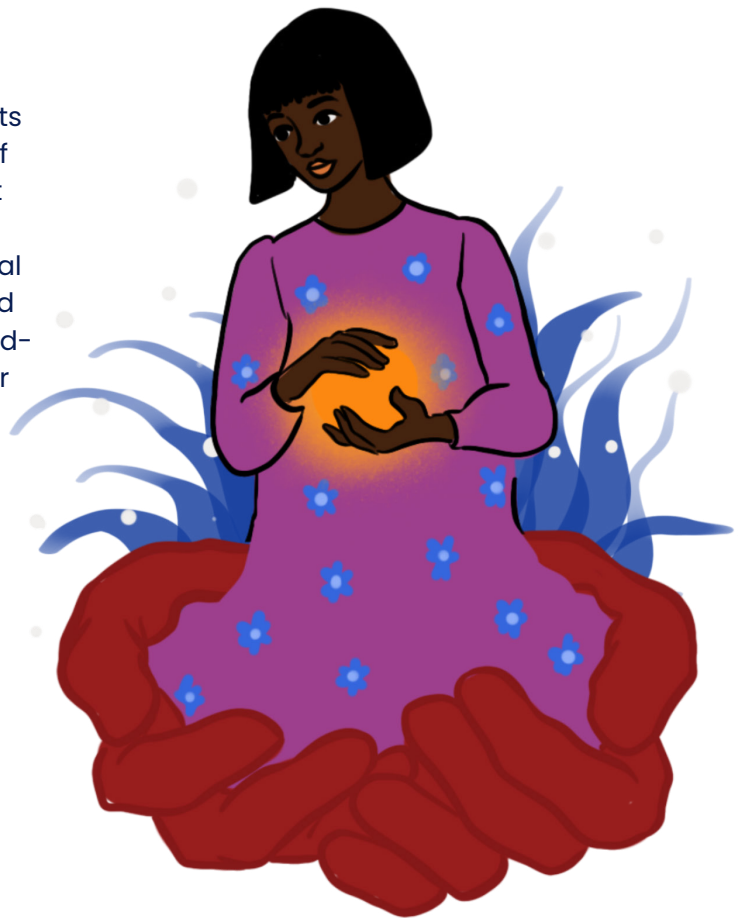
Partners are encouraged to co-create what accountability for funds looks like. It's important that the restrictions or requirements of funding don't stifle the energy and vision of youth-led groups. Co-leadership means that each partner has an equal say and voice in the direction of a project. It is not transactional or tokenistic, but supportive, participatory and mutually enriching. If funding is tied up in hard-to-navigate stipulations and requirements, or feels like charity, it can reduce partnerships to transactional exchanges and devalue the collaboration.⁷ To avoid this, established organizations partnering with young people should collaborate on creating realistic expectations, deadlines and deliverables.

“We are capable of leading alongside [elders], with enough empowerment and the giving of space and resources.”

Rahel Weldeab-Sebhatu, Afresist

⁵ <https://restlessdevelopment.org/2020/07/shifting-the-power-research/>

⁶ For a detailed list of funding, refer to the scoping document [“Maximising benefits: A recommended framework for volunteerism and compensation for young people,”](#) led by Restless Development, Civicus and Amnesty International. For more details, see [“Resourcing youth-led groups & movements: A reflective playbook for donors and youth organisers.”](#)



Case study 04

Funded Intergenerational Partnership — UNGEI, Transform Education and Plan International

In 2021, Transform Education entered into their first funded partnership with Plan International to launch a joint advocacy campaign called “Education Shifts Power.” The partnership aimed to advocate for girls’ education, leadership and climate justice throughout three key advocacy moments, the G7 summit, the GPE replenishment and COP26. The process began with Plan International approaching Transform Education to explore possible collaboration. Transform Education has built a reputation for its bold and creative advocacy tactics and feminist organizing abilities with a network that spans five continents.

With UNGEI’s support, Transform Education developed a proposed budget to cover their time and expertise, and agreed on a set of feminist working arrangements. Initially, negotiating a partnership fee and terms that worked for both sides was a challenge. Existing structures and ways of working within the organizations meant that establishing a unique partnership (with an informal network) was not straightforward. Progress could only be achieved by activating the patriarchal and corporate practices of hierarchy that are embedded in the organizations. This reveals that even with the best intentions, power dynamics and hierarchies within international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies can be difficult to overcome, and more senior allies are often needed to challenge these.

Ultimately, the Plan Global Hub was able to take on the partnership and meet Transform Education’s requests. Strong allies within the Plan Global Hub and partner country offices were integral to the success of this partnership. Through a series of calls with the project team (from Transform Education and Plan’s Global Hub), Terms of References were co-developed. These terms included Principles of Working and Behaviours and Values. Feminist principles, such as mutual respect, listening and transparency were identified as critical to the success of the partnership. Logistics and administration of a small, youth-led network meant that the Plan Global Hub had to be flexible and creative in ensuring that the agreed funds could get into the hands of Transform Education members directly. The co-creation of this partnership was a new model for all actors involved, and patience and openness was imperative for it to be successful.

“The partnership between Transform Education and Plan International to co-create the “Education Shifts Power” advocacy initiative was trailblazing because it was truly a co-creation process rooted in mutual respect, transparency, accountability and a commitment to addressing unequal power dynamics both within and through the partnership. Transform Education members were financially compensated for their time, energy and ideas and the partnership was set up in such a way that both Plan and Transform Education were able to learn and grow. For Plan International, as a large INGO, we were required to check our organizational ego and take on new and unfamiliar approaches which ultimately made incredible impact in the call to fund gender transformative climate justice education.”

*Yona Nestel, Inclusive Quality Education Hub Lead/
Inclusive Quality Education Policy and Advocacy Lead, Plan International*

Through the partnership, Transform Education and Plan International together co-created an advocacy strategy, co-organized events and participated in several global policy dialogues and events. Most notably the partnership developed the [Education Shifts Power Poem](#) for World Leaders, created [the Youth Led Statement on Gender Transformative Climate Education](#) and actively participated within COP26.

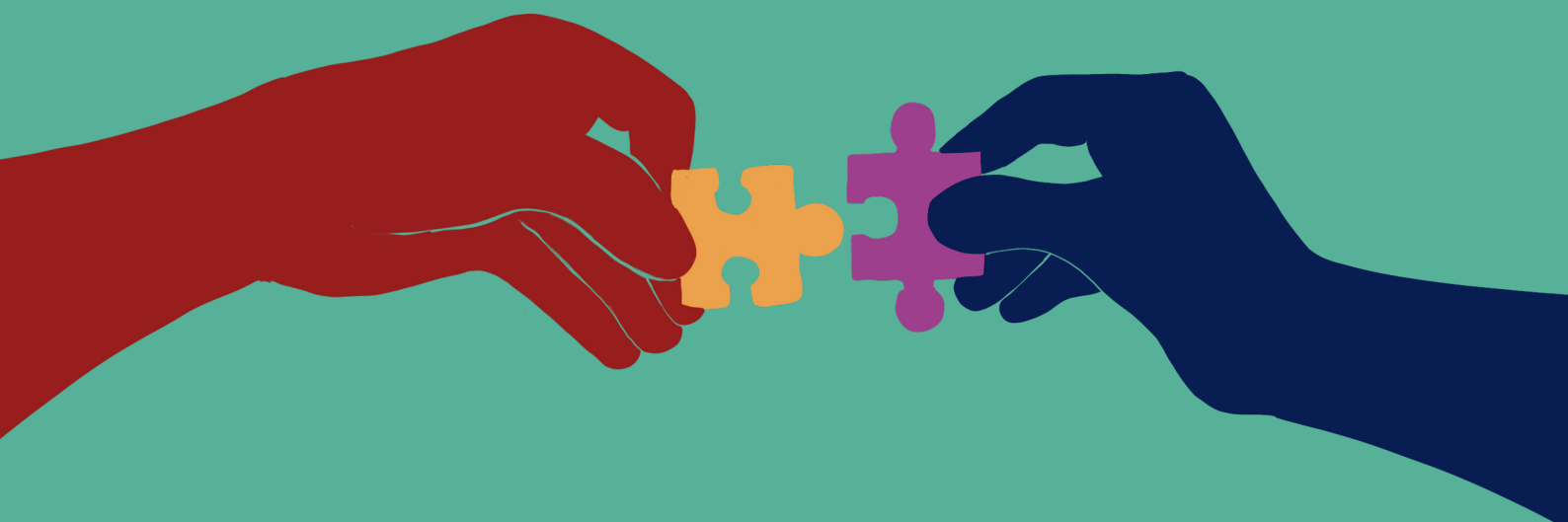
“Our partnership with Plan International is unique because it is based on co-creation from start to finish. We shaped this advocacy initiative collectively and the creation of our key demands was a joint effort. It is refreshing to be in a meaningful partnership rather than tokenistic inclusion of youth. To be given a platform and the freedom to create, rather than to be put on a stage with a premade set of speaking notes. To be in a space where all of our ideas are of equal value. A space that shifts power.”

Nnenna Onwuka, Project Coordinator, Transform Education

Plan International stepped forward to enter into this new process, trusted Transform Education, treated them as equals and always asked how they wanted to partner. They defied convention and together created a new normal for intergenerational co-leadership and partnership. Transform Education will no longer take on unpaid partnerships and hopes to inspire other youth-led organizations to know the worth of their time, value their expertise and knowledge and demand a power shift.

“This was our first funded partnership and it was exceptional because this was based on co-creation. We were valued, we were partners whose opinions were sought after instead of managed. It was a space that for all intents and purposes shifted power. This is the standard; this should be the norm.”

Shamah Bulangis, Co-chair, Transform Education





Conclusion: Five Anchoring Principles for Meaningful Intergenerational Partnerships

Every intergenerational partnership looks different. Cultural, geographical, professional and personal contexts all must be taken into consideration when melding communities. As this brief showcased, however, there are principles that should underpin every intergenerational partnership in order for it to be the most meaningful. First, to ensure their participation is recognized on the same plane as their older counterparts, young members of the partnership must be formally represented and backed by institutional commitments and resources. Second, safe spaces where discussions can be held to break down stereotypes and engrained ideas of power structures must be created. Third, there must be constant dialogue inclusive of diverse backgrounds and communication preferences. Fourth, the direction and outputs of the partnership must be co-lead and co-owned. For this to happen, it's important for older counterparts to help remove institutional or cultural barriers that might prevent youth leadership. Finally, young people must be adequately supported with both financial and nonfinancial resources in order for solidarity to turn to action. With these principles in mind, there is no limit to the potential learning, achievements and impact of a meaningful intergenerational partnership.

