



REPORT

GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM (GEF) MOBILIZATION GRANT

Key Highlights from the Grantee Learning Session

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Introduction

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is a global research institute with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and regional offices in Nairobi, Kenya, and New Delhi, India. ICRW has partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) to advocate for policy commitments across the six action coalition themes and the Compact on Women Peace and Security for the Generation Equality Forum (GEF). ICRW engaged governments, civil society, and other GEF partners through policy analysis, evidence-based research, and technical support to help drive bold, ambitious and evidence-based commitments to advance gender equity.

As part of this work, ICRW supported four partners to lead an intensive, five-month period of advocacy and coalition work, encouraging governments to make and implement commitments under the following Action Coalitions: Economic Justice and Rights, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Bodily Autonomy, Gender-Based Violence, and Feminist Movements and Leadership. Through these grants, ICRW aimed to support meaningful civil society engagement in the GEF process and strengthen collective action, advocacy and organizing to mobilize political will to advance gender responsive policies, laws and budgets, and COVID-19 recovery plans, among other commitments.

In October 2021, a learning session with grantee partners was convened by ICRW to share progress on the projects, reflect on the challenges and key lessons, and discuss emerging issues and trends, in relation to their advocacy and mobilization towards the implementation of GEF in different contexts.

Learning Session Highlights

Lessons Learned

A goal of the session was to learn about the impact of the GEF mobilization grants and understand how partners are engaging in advocacy in their regions.

COMMITMENT TO THE GEF PROCESS

Some grantee partners shared that the lack of commitment, political will, and engagement of governments in the GEF process, as well as weak implementation at the national level, was a major challenge that they had identified and were aiming to address in their activities. In Asia Pacific for example, ARROW shared the lack of engagement of governments in Asia, and while their work to mobilize civil society and feminist partners would not fill the gap left by lack of commitments by decision makers, it would go some ways to ensure increased awareness of the Generation Equality Forum and mobilization through advocacy.

DISCONNECT FROM LIVED REALITIES

Grantee partners also shared that an important element of this mobilization process was making clear the connections between the lived realities of their members, stakeholders, and communities, with the priorities of the GEF and Action Coalitions, and how the GEF connects with and contributes to other global, regional, and national processes. Grantees noted the ways in which the GEF process and work of the Action Coalitions did not connect with local realities, and that lack of awareness and understanding of the process, as well as lack of opportunity to engage or hesitance to engage in UN processes generally, were major challenges. Through mobilizing, convening, learning exchange, and consultation, many of the projects were able to engage civil society actors who had not been previously aware, bringing in new voices as well as working across different constituencies to strengthen the connections and increase engagement. The need to work continuously on connecting global processes to local and national realities, was seen as a key strategy to ensure the engagement of civil society in these processes, in particular for marginalized communities, and in countries and regions where there was little political commitment.



NATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND LOCAL-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

Beyond Beijing Committee also expressed a lack of awareness of the Mexico and Paris Forums, as well as the work of the Action Coalitions, which meant there was little advocacy from civil society towards increasing government commitments and implementation in Nepal. They found that there was a need to better translate national commitments from other processes, to local level, and to link with the GEF and the need for bold action at the local level. The engagement, leadership and capacity building of civil society organizations, youth, and feminist movements, was an important element of the strategy of all the grantee partners, and prioritizing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and incorporating a feminist intersectional approach was seen as critical for ongoing work.

The lack of participation and leadership of young people, and concerns regarding the tokenistic nature of youth engagement in the GEF and Action Coalitions, was another issue. FEIM aimed to address the issue of the lack of participation and lack of awareness of the process, by ensuring young people were better able to connect their priorities and agendas with the aims and priorities of the global processes. During the GEF Mobilization grant period, FEIM found that the young people they had engaged, found new and innovative ways and approaches to strengthen their mobilization activities, through virtual organizing, training, and convening.

As emphasized by FEIM, it was critical to support the activism and engagement of young people and adolescents in the GEF process. That the GEF and the priorities of the Action Coalitions focus so much on issues that significantly affect young people and adolescents' lives, such as CSE, SRHR, feminist leadership, climate justice, etc. it was seen by grantee partners as imperative and urgent for the engagement and leadership of young people to be central to strategy around strengthening GEF accountability moving forward. To create and convene space to deepen understanding and knowledge of the GEF process, and to provide tools and mechanisms for capacity building on advocacy was seen as urgent and critical.



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CROSS REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Through their work in the Action Coalitions, and wider regional and transnational organizing and mobilization around the GEF, some grantee partners were able to partner together on different aspects of their work. For example, the Beyond Beijing Committee engaged in ARROW's thematic consultations, and FEIM was invited, as co-leader in the Action Coalition on SRHR and Bodily Autonomy, to an ARROW-convened session, where there was an opportunity for cross-regional exchange and learning on the implementation of GEF commitments.

There was discussion on how similar cross-regional exchanges could take place in the future, in particular for young people engaging in the process and in advocacy, and to link that with the work happening at the global level. The 66th Commission on the Status of Women in 2022, was seen as a potential space for deepening strategy and for sharing and additional learning among grantee partners and other allies.

Learning and exchange opportunities, as well as developing a shared analysis and understanding of the GEF and Action Coalition blueprints, and its challenges and opportunities for progress, was seen by grantee partners as important next steps. If further resources were to be made available for these partnerships and collaboration, more regional partners, including across different movements and constituencies, could be engaged. Additional support could also strengthen the engagement of grantee partners and other allies working across the different thematic areas and Action Coalitions for example on climate justice or technology, as well as provide an opportunity to deepen strategy on how to collectively advocate for feminist leadership within the Action Coalitions, and strengthen implementation and accountability moving forward.

GEF ACCOUNTABILITY

There were significant concerns from grantee partners around the lack of transparency and accountability in the process to date, in particular around funding, and the general lack of clarity and direction moving forward. Other concerns included the role of the private sector, and how that has impacted both the engagement and leadership of civil society, as well as the lack of leadership and transparency from UN Women regarding next steps and how an effective accountability framework will be implemented, including at regional and national levels.

Regionalizing the process, as well as ensuring commitment, accountability, and implementation at national and local levels, was a key priority for grantee partners. Despite concerns around the lack of political commitment and engagement of governments in some regions, there was continued hope that with a robust cross-regional strategy, that there could be strengthened advocacy towards the implementation of GEF commitments and actions, and linkages made with other regional and national processes and policies. As mentioned, the work to translate the GEF objectives to regional and national contexts, was of high priority to grantee partners. Despite the lack of commitment, and such diverse levels of commitment and engagement by governments, an approach of linking national priorities to the global processes, was seen by grantee partners as a way to address the differing levels of implementation. Similarly, strengthening the linkages and integration with other processes, could ensure that governments have renewed and increased commitments to GEF objectives. For example, for the work of the Action Coalition on SRHR and Bodily autonomy, links with the commitments made through the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, and subsequent reviews, as well as regional commitments such as the Maputo Protocol, could strengthen accountability and implementation of the GEF. There were concerns around how there could be continued accountability at both national and global levels, with the emerging and urgent global crises that we face, as well as any shifting political leadership with elections and landscapes, that could impact negatively on GEF's implementation, as well as civil society's engagement in the process.

Grantee partners shared that there was urgent and significant need for accountability mechanisms for GEF and the Action Coalitions moving forward, increased civil society and young people's leadership in the processes, respecting the multi-stakeholder structure of the GEF, and ensuring equal decision making and leadership between the civil society, donors, and governments engaged. This included calls for monitoring and accountability mechanisms and bodies at national and regional levels, that ensure transparency and accountability from governments, private sector, and UN agencies in the implementation and execution of GEF goals and resource commitments.

LONG TERM GRANTS

Besides challenges with implementation, some grantees also expressed that the short duration of the project created challenges for engagement and participation of diverse stakeholders, especially at the national level as the Asia region is still experiencing new waves of COVID, and some countries are still in a lockdown. For some countries, it is also challenging, as the approval and release of foreign funds from the national bureau takes at least three months. An extension in the timeline at least until the first quarter of 2022 would have enabled the project to make significant progress towards the vision.

Progress

Grantees shared various examples of their activities that engaged a wide range of actors and stakeholders through their projects.

BEYOND BEIJING COMMITTEE (BBC)

In Nepal, the Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) aimed to strengthen and expand feminist movement and leadership, to amplify collective advocacy to promote leadership and meaningful participation of women, girls and non-binary people in all their diversity. BBC undertook activities to share information and resources related to the GEF, including outcomes from the Mexico and Paris forums. For example, a national conference titled “Sharing of Mexico and Paris Forum” was organized and representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, National Planning Commission, local government officials, feminist organizations and CSOs, and other stakeholders attended the gathering. BBC also implemented virtual dialogues and engagement that focused on sharing reflections on the need to mobilize and engage diverse stakeholders in the GEF process, as a way to ensure feminist leadership and meaningful participation in Nepal, and linking national realities to global processes. This online advocacy has been useful to strengthen civic space, and the participation of diverse women, girls, and non-binary people has also been an important opportunity to deepen GEF’s linkages with the SDGs and their effective implementation in the country.

The Beyond Beijing Committee also met with federal government representatives to discuss GEF commitments and ensure accountability and implementation of actions. Similarly, they convened with feminist groups, including local feminist and civil society leaders, to discuss and strategize around how to ensure implementation of the GEF commitments at local and national levels, and centering women’s leadership. Ongoing work under this grant period will also entail capacity building of elected members in Kathmandu on gender responsive programs, policies and budgets to promote and strengthen political will to advance gender equality.

FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY AND RESEARCH OF WOMEN (FEIM)

To address concerns regarding the lack of youth engagement and leadership in the GEF process and Forum, the Foundation for the Study and Research of Women (FEIM) implemented training and workshops to engage young people in advocacy, and to lead the development and implementation of advocacy strategies in Argentina. The training consisted of both a group

Feminist
Feminist
Feminist
Leadership
Leadership
Leadership



Training of young leaders to promote and strengthen youth advocacy in the Generation Equality Forum and the Action Coalitions

RESULTS

CSE EVERYWHERE!

The Metropolitan group of young people from Red Nac and the Xangó group carried out a survey on the application of CSE at the early childhood center in the city of San Miguel (province of Buenos Aires). The results of the surveys and interviews were gathered in a report that was presented to the center’s authorities, with recommendations to advance towards an effective application of CSE at the early childhood level. They plan to extend the survey to other centers in the future, and to present a document with recommendations to the competent municipal authorities. They are currently designing a dissemination campaign on CSE at the initial level.



Images (from top to bottom):
@beyondbeijingcommitteeneal via Instagram;
@fundacionfeim via Instagram



YOUNG WOMEN'S URBAN MOVEMENT (YWUM)

The Young Women's Urban Movement (YWUM) in Ghana also implemented leadership training with over 150 members and recruited new members into its movement, including young people and informal sector workers, to build advocacy capacity for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 (C190), and to strengthen GEF linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). YWUM met with regional ministers from the upper east region of Ghana to raise awareness, and also engaged in media and press activities, social media campaigns, and a twitter rally to mobilize around the GEF and ILO Convention 190 to end gender based violence and harassment in the world of work. As part of their action plan, they are also collaborating with the Ghana Trades Union Congress to coordinate activities to raise awareness on C190. At the national level, YWUM plans to meet with the Gender and the Employment Minister as well as the National Chief Imam to raise awareness of the need for the ratification and implementation of C190. YWUM's advocacy work aimed to target key government appointees such as the Minister of Employment, Chief Labour Officer, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Minister of Justice, and the Attorney General. At these meetings, movement members presented case studies documenting stories from young women themselves to justify the urgency around this issue and make a strong case for timely ratification and implementation. The activities above were carried out in collaboration with other youth movements, feminist movements, and women's rights organizations.

ASIAN PACIFIC RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN (ARROW)

Through the GEF mobilization grant, ARROW aimed to regionalize and localize the GEF actions on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Gender Based Violence (GBV). ARROW's activities brought together GEF commitment makers from the region and feminist civil society organizations, and aimed to generate commitments from policy makers. This is crucial in the context that the engagement of policymakers from the Asia region has been very limited in the entire GEF process. As part of ARROW's mobilization of allies and partners in the region around GEF and the work of the Action Coalitions (ACs), they conceptualized 4 thematic consultations, to raise awareness of the process and outcomes from the Forum. Consultations focused on, for example gender norms, co-hosted with partners including Justice for Sisters and in collaboration with the co-lead for the Action Coalition on GBV, OutRight International, with a focus on ending violence against communities with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, a session on SRHR and GBV co-hosted with Breakthrough India, as well as another consultation on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) with youth partner, YPEER Asia Pacific. The consultations aimed at highlighting the synergies and links with other national and regional processes, and to build understanding around the interlinked nature of the GEF and Action Coalitions with other existing mechanisms. ARROW has been working with the Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI) in Pakistan, a CSO promoting the rights of marginalized groups including transgender people as well as partners in Nepal such as YUWA, Visible Impact and YPEER Nepal, youth led and youth focused organizations, the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), a coalition of women's organizations in Malaysia, to build awareness and knowledge of Action Coalition commitments and to engage young people and feminist organizations at the forefront of advocacy on GEF and its implementation and Likhaan in the Philippines that works on health and rights of women in marginalized communities. ARROW through this work has begun to chart a pathway for next steps towards continuing to regionalize and localize GEF commitments. The project aimed to meaningfully engage national and regional level CSOs who have strong networks at the grassroots level and have a strong record of advocacy with the national and local level governments.

Image: ©Arrow, found at <https://arrow.org.my/>

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ARROW is proud to be a
leader of the
ACTION COALITION on
**BODILY AUTONOMY &
SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH & RIGHTS**

#generationequalityasia





Summary

In conclusion, grantee partners shared an overwhelming support for continued collaboration and deepening of collective strategy toward the implementation of the GEF and Action Coalitions. Capacity building and engagement of civil society actors, as well as increased cross-regional and cross-movement strategy, learning, and exchange, were seen as key ways moving forward to ensure strengthened accountability. Accountability mechanisms at global, regional, and national levels to ensure transparency and civil society leadership and the inclusion and prioritization of marginalized voices, were seen by grantee partners as urgent and critical next steps, and that more needed to be done to ensure civil society actors and organizations, feminist movements, and other actors, were increasing their advocacy efforts to governments, to significantly strengthen commitments to advance gender equity and justice.

Grantee Spotlight



ASIAN PACIFIC RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN (ARROW)

ARROW is a regional non-profit women's organization based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia striving to enable women to be equal citizens in all aspects of their life by ensuring that their sexual and reproductive health and rights are achieved. ARROW'S project 'Regionalizing and localizing GEF Action Coalitions Context' focused on addressing gaps in Asia Pacific and the lack of commitment and accountability of governments in the region towards the Generation Equality Forum. During this grant period, ARROW focused on strengthening and building leadership among CSOs for policy advocacy with their respective governments to make bold and transformative commitments on gender equality. The project focuses on Action Coalitions on GBV, as well as on Bodily Autonomy and SRHR, working with four governments in the region including Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and Pakistan.

For more information on ARROW: <https://arrow.org.my/>



BEYOND BEIJING COMMITTEE (BBC), NEPAL

The Beyond Beijing Committee is a human rights feminist organization working towards the civil, political, economic and social empowerment of women and girls in Nepal. BBC has been advocating and working continuously on the Beijing Platform for Action aftermath of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing since 1995.

The 'Feminist in Action to achieve Generation Equality' project focuses on the need for the government in Nepal to promote, support, protect and expand civic space and eliminate barriers for meaningful participation of women, girls and nonbinary people in all their diversity for feminist action. BBC aimed to mobilize advocates from the grassroot level and other stakeholders to raise awareness, and amplify collective advocacy to promote leadership and meaningful participation in the GEF processes. The Beyond Beijing Committee has been engaged with other civil society through the Action Coalition on Feminist Movement and Leadership, as well as liaise with UN Women on the implementation of GEF.

For more information on BBC: www.beyondbeijing.org



THE FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY AND RESEARCH OF WOMEN (FEIM)

The Foundation for the Study and Research of Women (FEIM) is a non-governmental organization based in Argentina working towards the equality of all women and girls through the elimination of gender-based inequalities and improving access to education, work, health, social and political participation.

Through the project on 'Training of youth leaders to promote and strengthen youth advocacy in the Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalition' FEIM is committed to training youth in political advocacy and feminist leadership with the emphasis on the Beijing and other rights agendas, the Generation Equality process, the Action Coalitions and the actions on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health. Youth were also trained to design and implement their own unique projects across the country. FEIM is a leader of the SRHR and Bodily Autonomy Action Coalition and has been actively engaged with the GEF Secretariat.

For more information on FEIM: <http://feim.org.ar/>



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THE YOUNG WOMEN'S URBAN MOVEMENT (YUWM), GHANA

The Young Urban Women's Movement is a vibrant, young woman-led movement in Ghana. The mission of the movement is to build campaigns and champion advocacy work on issues concerning the rights of women and girls in the country. Using a community-led, interlinked, and intersectional feminist approach, the movement works toward a just and feminist economic system coupled with gender-responsive public services and young women claiming bodily integrity across Ghana. YUWM is the outcome of an ActionAid Ghana-led project, which began in 2013 and focused on supporting marginalized and excluded young women in urban areas to address the structural barriers that prevent them from fully enjoying their rights to economic security and bodily integrity. ActionAid Ghana acted as a fiscal sponsor on this grant.

The Young Urban Women's Movement (YUWM) GEF mobilization project, aimed to conduct leadership training and advocacy work toward obtaining a commitment from key government officials to ratify the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 190 (C190) in Ghana to end gender based violence and harassment in the world of work. The project focused on advocacy and campaigning work alongside leadership development, with the ultimate goal of the elimination and prevention of gender-based violence and achievement of women's economic justice in Ghana. This campaign directly fits into the gender-based violence, economic justice and rights, and feminist movements and leadership Action Coalitions of the GEF.



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