



Investing in the GFF for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender Equality, and Country Priorities:

A Civil Society Call for Action for Donors and GFF Country Governments

As global civil society (CS) and youth leaders, **we call on donors and GFF country governments to prioritize gender equality and bolster health care access for women and girls through investing in, and aligning domestic resources to, the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children, and Adolescents (GFF) to fulfill its 2021 resource mobilization goal of USD \$1.2 billion** and ensure its full resourcing need of USD \$2.5 billion by the end of 2025.

A key milestone to advance gender equality and support the GFF Resource Mobilization Campaign is the [Generation Equality Forum](#) where partners will rally under a GFF SRHR acceleration plan to be announced in Paris at the end of June. This plan will help increase access to family planning for 25 million additional women and adolescents; integrate SRHR services and catalyze more and better financing in at least 20 countries; advance legal and policy reforms in 10 countries; and scale up financial support to women and youth-led advocacy networks.

The GFF has proven itself a leader in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, children, and adolescents. Through its deep-rooted commitment to support and empower countries, including civil society and youth, to strengthen their primary health care systems, the focus has included critical efforts to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), tackle inequalities, and shift systems that have the power to enhance women's choice, bodily autonomy, and agency.

Yet the COVID-19 pandemic threatens this progress and the future livelihoods of the most marginalized, including women and girls. It has sparked a secondary crisis for women, children, and adolescents – *which we have seen, first-hand across our countries* – for whom essential health services, including SRHR, have been disrupted as a result of lockdowns, fear of infection, commodities supply chain barriers, and resources diverted elsewhere. As community leaders, we have witnessed how COVID-19 has further exacerbated gender inequities and reduced access to essential services, further underscoring the need to prioritize resources that ensure health access for women and girls now.

Now more than ever, we need to address the COVID-19 crisis through a gender-responsive approach. We know that the GFF, in partnership with civil society and youth, has the potential to ensure that hard-earned health gains are not erased by the pandemic, while supporting and empowering country-led, sustainable health systems for the future. By fully resourcing the GFF, we can:

- support and empower countries to strengthen their health systems by funneling resources to country-led, evidence-based investments, including family planning, reproductive health, and other essential services, such as maternal healthcare, immunizations, and nutrition;
- prioritize gender equality by addressing the underlying structural barriers that limit health access, catalyzing improved health outcomes; and

The Power of the GFF and Civil Society and Youth Engagement: Working Together for SRHR, Gender Equality, & Country Priorities

- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, effective CS engagement in the multistakeholder country platform and the GFF process contributed to an increase in the government's budget for health, ensuring that more women and girls are able to access quality health care.
- In **Kenya**, CS advocacy and partnership together with government and GFF leaders, led to the development and launch of a comprehensive, inclusive multi-stakeholder country platform in 2021 – a key ingredient to facilitating alignment across global health initiatives and development partners around a common country-driven health agenda.
- Youth-led monitoring and community engagement in **Senegal** have advanced sustainable improvements in the health system by putting women, girls, and communities in the driver's seat.
- In **Zambia**, when COVID-19 hit, CS organizations mobilized quickly to maintain essential health services, particularly for youth, mapping out where youth SRHR services were still available and sharing this with youth through social and traditional media.

- ensure women and girls are empowered as leaders in GFF processes at global and country levels, guaranteeing their voices and perspectives are heard and leveraged to drive change.

We commend the leadership and support of donors and country governments who have already committed to the 2021 GFF resource mobilization effort at the launch event in May, including: Canada, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, and an anonymous international foundation. We urge you to sustain the legacy of hard-won progress toward gender equality and invest in the GFF to ensure a future that delivers health care and rights for all.

Signed,

GFF Civil Society and Youth Investors Group Representatives

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- Maty Dia, Partnership Manager, GFF CSO Hub, Senegal
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...in collaboration with and on behalf of the 370+ members of the CS coordinating group and youth constituency of the GFF.