



Key RECOMMENDATIONS

NO STRAIGHT LINES

TRANSFORMATIONS WITH YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANISERS

A resource for INGOs and Funders



About this resource

For more information about this resource, please email: info@youngfeministfund.org

Thank you to everyone at FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund for all their hard work, time and expertise in writing this resource! Without them this toolkit would absolutely not be possible. Special thanks to: Saadat Savieva, Jovana Djordjevic, María Díaz Esquerro, Ledys Sanjuan, Mayra Samaniego, Kinga Wisniewska

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A note on terms used

We have chosen the term Young Feminist Organisers (YFOs) to refer to the diversity of collectives, groups, and organizations led by young feminists engaged in this process. We recognise that no specific term that captures covers the diversity of ways that young feminist activists are currently organising - from informal to formal - with an array of decision making models and structures, however using one term enables us to reference their work with consistent terminology in this report toolkit. It is important to note that we are using this term to refer to the collective work of young feminists, rather than their individual leadership, wishing to lift up their important work in groups, collectives and organisations.

FRIDA uses the term "the Global South" in this research since it is commonly used terminology within philanthropy to refer to contexts outside of "the Global North" and former colonial powers, the US/Canada/Western Europe/Australia and New Zealand. However, in FRIDA's approach, the Global South refers to the following regions: Latin America & the Caribbean; Africa; the Middle East (Western Asia); South, South East, East Asia and the Pacific; Central Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central and North Asia.





Based on its work over nearly a decade, this resource is a consolidation of knowledge and experience on engaging and being in dialogue with international non-government organizations (INGOS), funders and other philanthropic actors on how they can work with and better support young feminist organisers for transformation. See the full report online at the link below, with context, methodology, research findings, and voices of young feminist organizers and individuals working at INGOs, funders, and other philanthropic institutions

<http://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/>

We recognise that the realities and needs of INGOs and funders vary vastly. This means that the type of engagement and approach they will have with young feminist organisers will also be different. To ensure that the recommendations are useful and as practical as possible, we have clustered them then under different entry points. In a moment where the lines between a funder and an INGO are becoming more blurred, with some INGOs developing funding mechanisms, and some funders increasingly exploring more holistic programming, we felt it made the most sense to focus our recommendations more in terms of the type of engagement you envision with young feminist organisers than the type of organisation you are.

1. Grantmaking directly to young feminist organisations:

If you plan to directly resource young feminist organisations with funding or services.



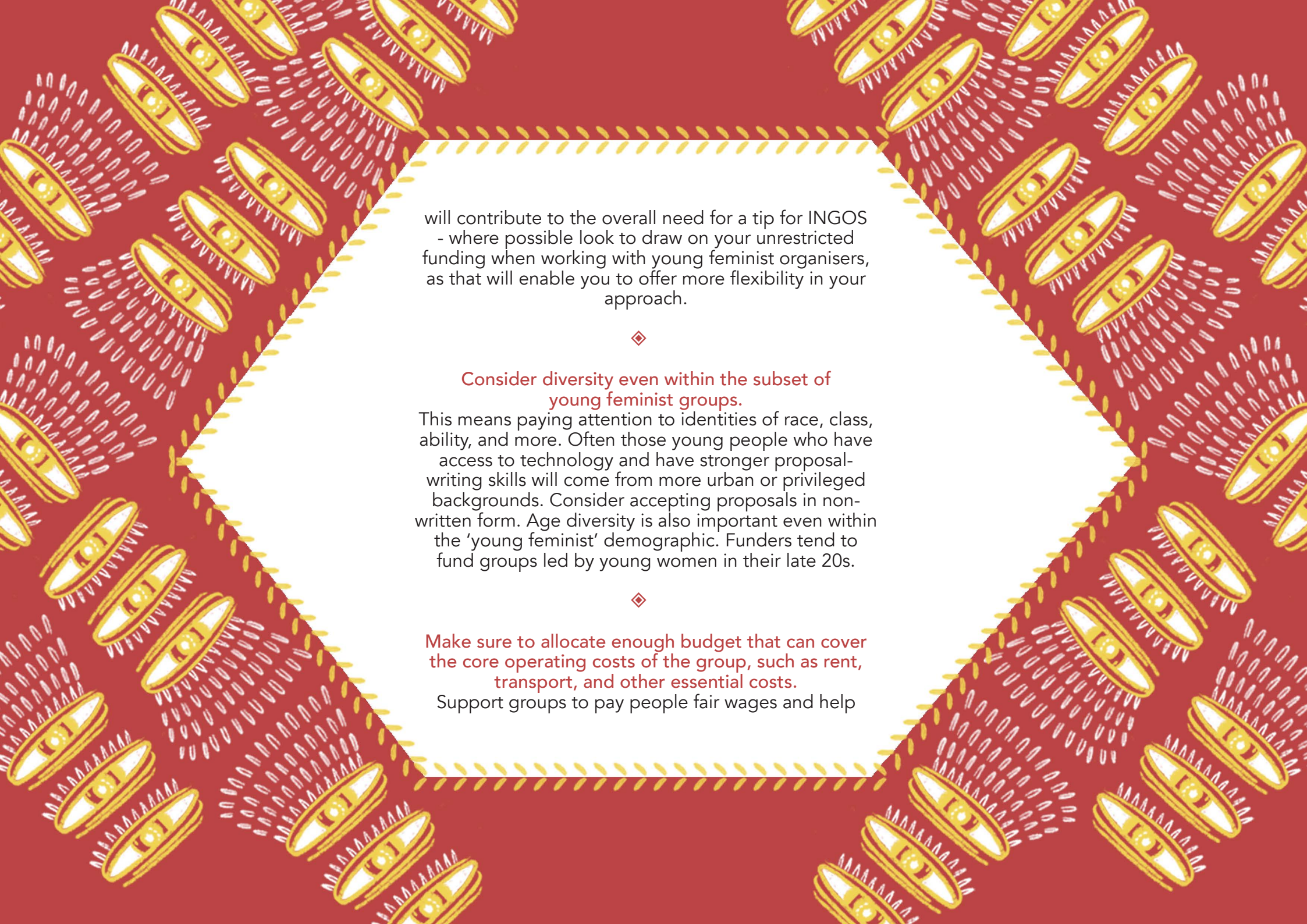
Raise awareness with your team on the lived experiences of young feminist organisers and how they operate in order to foster a shared commitment of flexibility, respect, and creativity.

All members of the staff should especially understand and be mindful of the reasons why young feminist groups are unregistered or informal, which can either be a political choice, necessity due to security reasons, or because they are still emerging and nascent.



Set aside a percentage of your annual budget and disaggregate allocations by looking at age and gender.

This will naturally enable you to set and achieve goals, and give you a structure to track some impact. Furthermore, tracking allocations and actual expenditure



will contribute to the overall need for a tip for INGOS
- where possible look to draw on your unrestricted
funding when working with young feminist organisers,
as that will enable you to offer more flexibility in your
approach.




**Consider diversity even within the subset of
young feminist groups.**

This means paying attention to identities of race, class,
ability, and more. Often those young people who have
access to technology and have stronger proposal-
writing skills will come from more urban or privileged
backgrounds. Consider accepting proposals in non-
written form. Age diversity is also important even within
the 'young feminist' demographic. Funders tend to
fund groups led by young women in their late 20s.



**Make sure to allocate enough budget that can cover
the core operating costs of the group, such as rent,
transport, and other essential costs.**

Support groups to pay people fair wages and help



young people claim what they are worth. Often, young people are seen as volunteers and stereotyped for not needing to provide for a family, even though they may work just as much as others and be a key breadwinner at home.




However, respect those groups that do not want to have paid staff for political reasons. In these cases especially, do not overlook the importance of supporting the group to build in other compensation mechanisms that may address other needs such as self-care and security.

For example, while a group may not want to have paid staff in order to remain more informal, their members and volunteers may still need stipends or allowances for transport, security protections, and/or team-building and collective care activities.



Find alternative ways of transferring funding. This is especially important for Finance Staff to investigate. Be open and explore how to do transfers to



individuals in an accountable way via memorandums of understanding, and consider how to borrow practices from cash transfers programs in other development work in order to apply it to groups that do not have organizational bank accounts.




Support program officers to exercise flexibility and adaptability on a case by case basis.

Young feminist organisers are not a monolith and social change is never linear.

- This could be in the form of offering no cost extensions, in cases when groups are still new at receiving funding and implementing projects in a set amount of time. This gives them space to practice emergent learning and manage their projects carefully.

- For groups in high security risk contexts, writing reports and keeping records in their places of work is dangerous. A member of your Program Staff can offer to hold a reporting session where groups report verbally, and your staff keep a written record at your secure office instead.




- If you are funding groups who have one or two other funders, try to find out who those funders are and coordinate with the permission of the group, communicate with the funders to reduce burden and see how you can support the group.



Work with other established organizations as hosts or sponsors, if it is not an option for you to support unregistered or newly established organisations or groups that may not have a financial track record.

FRIDA, other women's funds, or local organizations in particular can potentially provide this support.

- In this scenario, ensure that young activists are involved in this decision and the process of creating formal agreement documents (ie, MoUs, contracts, etc) to ensure that they will in the end have access to the funds. This may mean **creating space to be discuss possible generational power dynamics** when the host organization staff are older and may exercise some control over funding with the intention of being 'helpful'.



We learned that youth play an important role in seeding adolescent and girl or non-binary child-led initiatives. So if you want to fund adolescents and younger, make sure to be clear about funding girl-centered groups where work is implemented jointly with and for girls. If they can be co-led by young feminist activists older than 18 years old but younger than 30 years old the better. These young leaders meaningfully engage girls and nonbinary children to enter feminist movements, and consequently bridge intergenerational divides between really young and older generations.



If you decide to fund unregistered groups, make sure to draw on the advice and support from other local organizations or funders who also do this. Discuss it openly with the grantee partner in order to mitigate risks, troubleshoot, and learn together.



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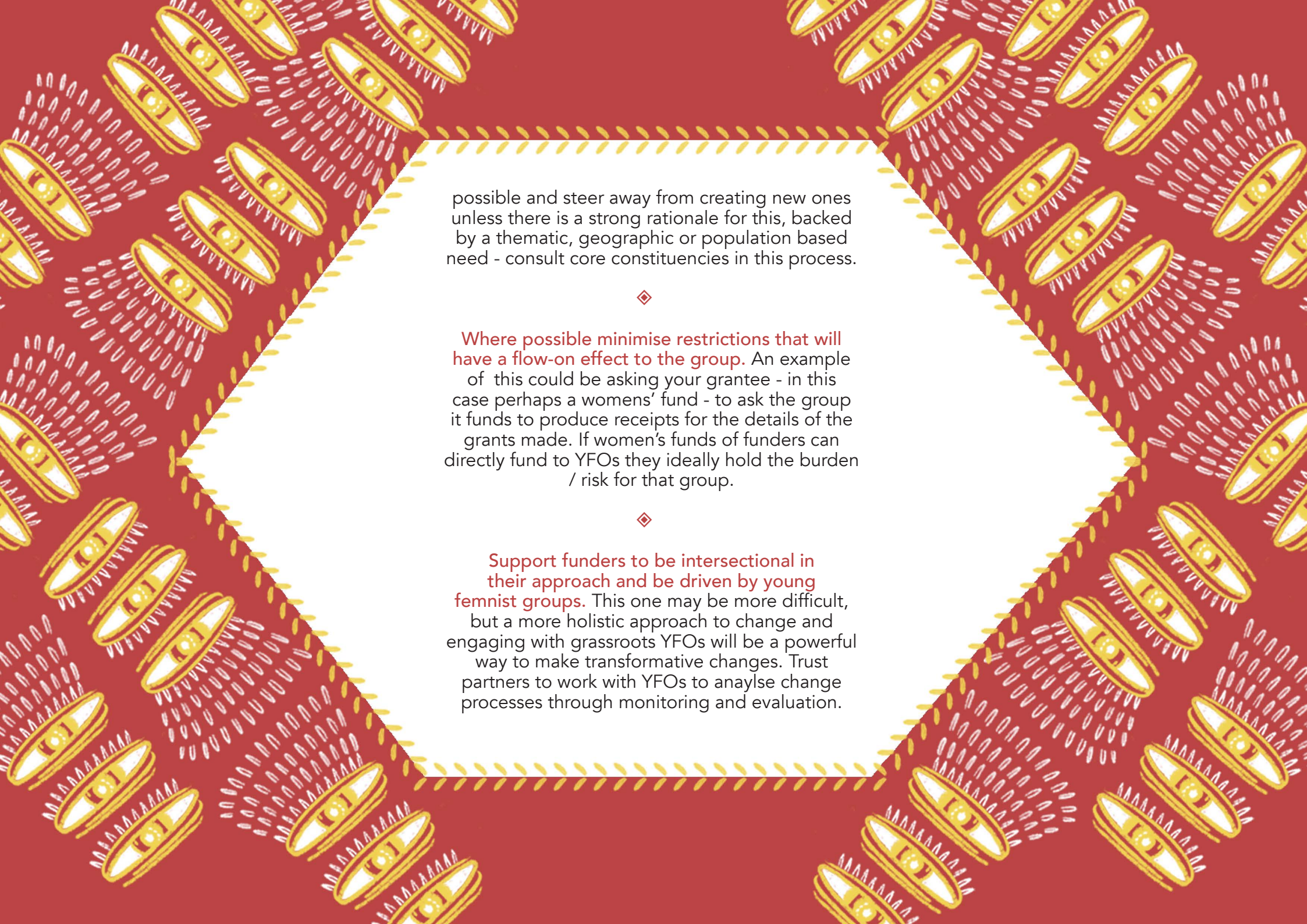
Financial support is key but **NOT** the only need of girl-led groups. Although financial support is one of the most significant needs of girl-led groups, girls all over the world also need and want other forms of support such as technical assistance, networking opportunities and the ability to interact with peers.

2. Grantmaking through other funders or donor collaboratives:

If you plan to fund young feminist organisers through another organizations - such as FRIDA, a women's fund, donor collaborative or another funding mechanism.

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Use existing mechanisms: a variety of funding mechanisms exist that are reaching young feminist led groups across the world, in particular these include global, regional and local women's funds - The With and For Girls Collective and others. Seek to work with these existing mechanisms where



possible and steer away from creating new ones unless there is a strong rationale for this, backed by a thematic, geographic or population based need - consult core constituencies in this process.



Where possible minimise restrictions that will have a flow-on effect to the group. An example of this could be asking your grantee - in this case perhaps a womens' fund - to ask the group it funds to produce receipts for the details of the grants made. If women's funds of funders can directly fund to YFOs they ideally hold the burden / risk for that group.



Support funders to be intersectional in their approach and be driven by young feminist groups. This one may be more difficult, but a more holistic approach to change and engaging with grassroots YFOs will be a powerful way to make transformative changes. Trust partners to work with YFOs to analyse change processes through monitoring and evaluation.




Be clear on your role and entry point in the ecosystem and respect the expertise of the organisation you are granting to to work directly with young feminist organisations, this means giving them space, resources and trust to do the important relationship building work, and being mindful of pushing an agenda.

3. Programs about, for, or with young feminist organisers:

If you plan to create programs that engage young feminists organisers, or have young women and girls as part of, driving or beneficiaries from a project or program:



Before setting up the program, ask yourself clearly how you want young feminists to be engaged, consider the pathway to getting the program approved, funded, designer... where in the process can you infuse young feminists organisers. **Ask yourself - is it a good use of their**



time, and how it will enrich the quality and legitimacy of the work. Communicate the method of involvement, consultation or participation that you plan young feminists to have in the process with all involved in the work.



Include young feminists in the design of the initiative.

Some concrete ways to engage young people in your work include this include:


- Set up an advisory groups such as [FRIDA Advisory Group](#) and where possible compensate advisor time and consider reciprocity.

- Explore participatory or peer led decision making models.



Hire young people at your organisation.

Could you prioritise someone under 30 and perhaps from the global south for certain positions? How can you support this sort of accessibility in your organisation?



Build in some form of **grassroot accountability in the program**, this could be getting feedback from those who are part of the program, as well as creating regular moments to reflect and ensure the design is responsive to the changing needs of young feminist organisers.

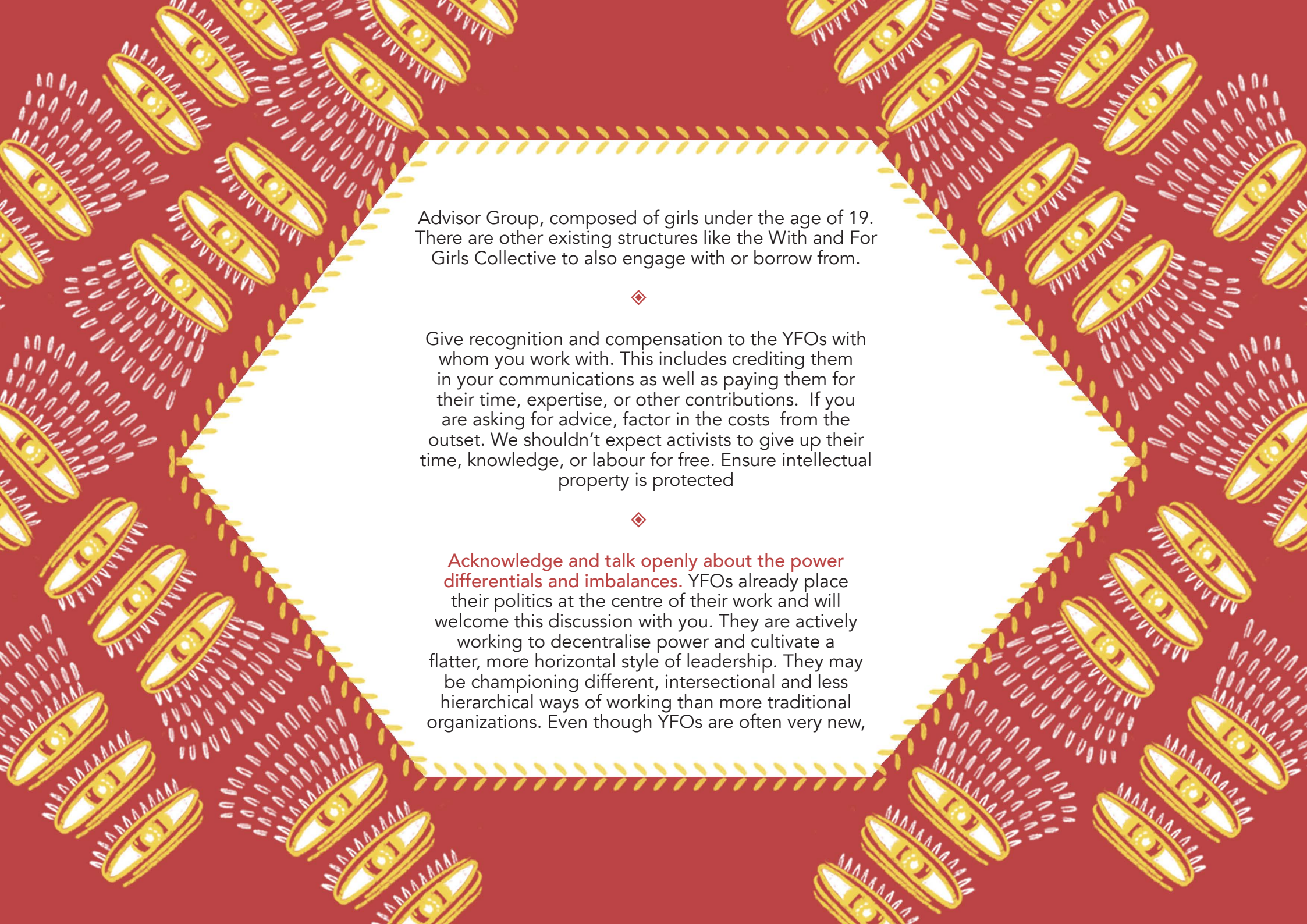


Challenge / re-examine internal organizational structures that reproduce sexism or ageism. To do so requires recognising sexism and ageism faced by young feminists and valuing their struggles and experiences as much as those of other organizations.

4. General recommendations for working with young feminist organisers - directly or indirectly



Engage young feminists in strategy development or advice for your organisation or foundation. Consider FRIDA itself, or borrow from our practice of creating Advisory Committees of young women and trans*youth from specific regions or themes, as well as a Girls



Advisor Group, composed of girls under the age of 19. There are other existing structures like the With and For Girls Collective to also engage with or borrow from.



Give recognition and compensation to the YFOs with whom you work with. This includes crediting them in your communications as well as paying them for their time, expertise, or other contributions. If you are asking for advice, factor in the costs from the outset. We shouldn't expect activists to give up their time, knowledge, or labour for free. Ensure intellectual property is protected




Acknowledge and talk openly about the power differentials and imbalances. YFOs already place their politics at the centre of their work and will welcome this discussion with you. They are actively working to decentralise power and cultivate a flatter, more horizontal style of leadership. They may be championing different, intersectional and less hierarchical ways of working than more traditional organizations. Even though YFOs are often very new,

small organisations with relatively little negotiating power, they have the capacity to engage INGOs and funders on their own terms. Take steps to ensure any “negotiations” or partnerships are conducted in a “friendlier”, more transparent, accountable, respectful and collaborative approach. When creating MoUs or contracts - ask if there are any questions, comments or changes. Be prepared and open to try and accommodate these changes. The investment in starting off right usually pays off in final results.



Do not rely on the quality of the personal relationship with a particular individuals of the INGO or Foundation staff. Some institutional steps could include:

- Create a policy for engagement with young feminist organisations or engagement with youth, ensure the policy looks at things such as power differentials.
- Co-develop MoUs with YFOs based on mutual partnership to work through the different contributions and make clear both of your commitments to each other (not just the YFO’s obligations to the funder).

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- Ensure staff who work with young feminist organisers have training or awareness of the power dynamics at play.

Funders and INGOs should support young feminists to **grow and cultivate their preferred leadership style.**

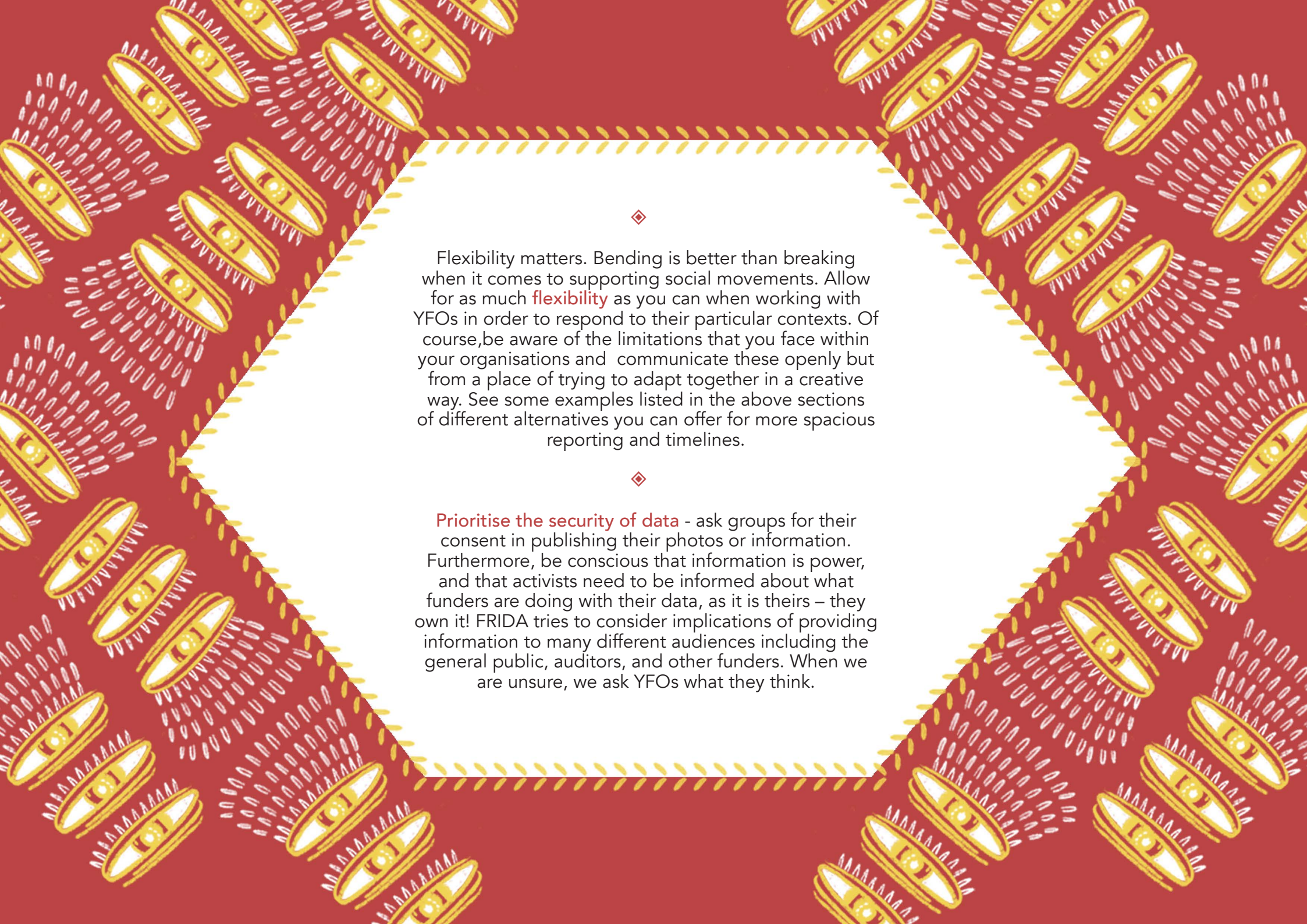
Concretely this can mean:

- Fund or invite more than one person to enter into a conversation, conference, or any space hosted or facilitated by the funder. By inviting more than one person you can enable co-leadership structures and combat competitiveness. It can also support more organizational learning and intergenerational exchange, supporting younger and older people to attend.
- Make an effort to create opportunities for collective engagement that mirrors collective structures - such as group conference calls, provide time for feedback to enable individuals to consult the collective.
- Be conscious when you may be creating heroes or focus on individuals and overshadowing the collective work and struggle.



Be a two-way bridge to try to **really listen**, operate from a place of **humility and self awareness** and **be open to learning** and **be more willing to take risks**, as **activists do every day**.

- Continuously improve the knowledge of your staff on why it is important to engage with and support the young feminist organisations. Organisation staff, and in particular those engaged in gender equality and youth programming on the ground, should be aware and conscious of how to meaningfully work with young feminist organisers.
- Always offer extra information and context to explain your internal processes. Considering the amount of information groups need to submit to funders, it is more fair and mutually beneficial to share the same amount of information back to them about your own governance, systems, and capacities. This openness may invite you all to be more creative in dealing with challenges and support your relationship throughout the project.



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Flexibility matters. Bending is better than breaking when it comes to supporting social movements. Allow for as much **flexibility** as you can when working with YFOs in order to respond to their particular contexts. Of course, be aware of the limitations that you face within your organisations and communicate these openly but from a place of trying to adapt together in a creative way. See some examples listed in the above sections of different alternatives you can offer for more spacious reporting and timelines.

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Prioritise the security of data - ask groups for their consent in publishing their photos or information. Furthermore, be conscious that information is power, and that activists need to be informed about what funders are doing with their data, as it is theirs – they own it! FRIDA tries to consider implications of providing information to many different audiences including the general public, auditors, and other funders. When we are unsure, we ask YFOs what they think.

Speaking of security, support YFOs to access flexible or specific funding for holistic security, and to link with key funders who prioritise this work such as the [Urgent Action Funds for Women Human Rights](#). This is important in times of emergency but also outside of it as all activists need resources to prepare, heal, recover, and build overall resilience.



