What Does it Take to Transform Gendered Systems?

Key Recommendations for Co-Impact’s Gender Fund

June 2021
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Executive Summary

Co-Impact is a global philanthropic collaborative for just and inclusive systems change. Too often, systems that provide basic services like health, education, and economic opportunities can be ineffective and exclusionary. Governments spend billions of dollars and allocate resources (workforce and infrastructure) in ways that do not always produce good outcomes or benefit everyone equally. We must address “gender systems” – the underlying norms, laws, practices, sanctions, and decision-making processes that lead to systematic barriers and persistent discrimination against women and girls – as well as create opportunities for them to exercise their leadership, voice, agency, and power, as individuals and collectively. We fund partners to ensure that public (and where relevant private) health, education, and economic systems work and are accountable to those they are intended to serve.

Our second fund – the Gender Fund (placeholder name) – is currently under development and expected to launch in late 2021.
The Gender Fund will focus on transformative systems change for gender equality, with an emphasis on elevating women and girls’ power, agency, and leadership at all levels. To ensure that the Gender Fund complements, builds on, and contributes to past and present work, we have conducted a process of listening and learning. In the past year, we have conducted over 50 exploratory conversations with representatives of women’s rights organizations and women’s funds, feminist activists and scholars, and cross-sector experts, leaders, funders, and practitioners, prioritizing those from the Global South.

The conversations were rich, varied, and nuanced. Some of the key themes that emerged are:

1. We are at a momentous time in history that offers an unprecedented opportunity to be catalytic.
2. Achieving gender equality requires a systemic response, which relies on long-term commitments and investments.
3. Feminist movements and women’s rights organizations play a vital role in systems change, yet have been historically underfunded.
4. To build resilient organizations, investment is required in critical capabilities and systems.
5. Investment is required to promote women and girls’ individual and collective leadership, from household and community to institutions and government.
6. Adopting an intersectional approach that is cognizant of context is a fundamental requirement for systems change.
7. Funding should be directed to organizations in the Global South.
8. To achieve any form of social change, evidence matters, yet when it comes to gender equality, there is a dearth of data.

Informed by these conversations, our thinking has evolved. Thanks to the insights and expertise of our previous work and consultees, we are consolidating a holistic and comprehensive set of outcomes, refining our theory of change, developing an ecosystem approach to grantmaking, and tackling the barriers to gender equality. We are also continuing to explore and refine in some areas, including our governance structure, our approach to evaluation and learning, how we will operationalize our ecosystems approach, and our approach to partnerships and collaboration.

Our process of consultation has been an invaluable experience for Co-Impact during the development of the Gender Fund and we are deeply committed to continuing on this learning journey. We know this is just the beginning and look forward to continued learning and collaboration for a more just and fairer world for women and girls.

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1 Co-Impact uses the terms ‘woman’, ‘women’ and ‘gender’ throughout to be inclusive of people across the gender spectrum. We seek to advance gender equality through an intersectional approach that is inclusive of race, caste, class, sexual identity, disability, and other contextual markers of discrimination and exclusion.
1. Introduction

1.1 About Co-Impact
Launched in 2017, Co-Impact is a global philanthropic collaborative for just and inclusive systems change. We fund partners to transform health, education, and economic systems in order to achieve equitable and inclusive impact at scale in countries across the Global South.

Co-Impact brings together a global group of funding partners committed to enabling meaningful systems change for millions of people. Funders join the collaborative in order to pool or align their resources, networks, and experience, creating significant leverage for their effort and resources. Together, our funding partners support powerful, locally-rooted coalitions to build robust and resilient societies for the long term.

1.2 Gender Fund: the story so far
Co-Impact's first fund, Foundational Fund, establishes and advances a model of collaborative philanthropy, bringing together funders to support systems change in the foundational sectors of health, education, and economic opportunity. We expect to announce our second fund, the Gender Fund, at the Generation Equality Forum in June and launch it at the end of 2021.

The Gender Fund is focused on transformative systems change, with an emphasis on elevating women and girls' power, agency, and leadership at all levels. Gender discrimination is entrenched into systems in every country around the world and is exacerbated when it intersects with other forms of oppression based on race, class, disability, caste, or sexual identity, among others. We know that to transform systems, we need to understand power – who has it, and who is excluded. We also know that this understanding won’t be possible without focusing on gender dynamics and taking an intersectional lens to systems change.

The Gender Fund builds on three years of learning and evidence-gathering from our existing work. We have consulted with our program partners, advisors, and advocates from within communities and movements, and global experts and activists. We have continually used these inputs to evolve and strengthen our core concepts to ensure they reflect the interests of the communities we seek to serve. From there, we began an extensive process of listening and learning, focusing particularly on perspectives from the Global South. Alongside this process, we have commissioned a series of evidence reviews that are both informing our approach and helping us identify areas for research and investment.

1.3 Listening and Learning
One core part of these consultations was a series of structured discussions with more than 50 leaders on the purpose, design, and structure of the Gender Fund. This report presents an overview of what we heard during this structured consultation process. It summarizes the key themes that emerged from our conversations and outlines how our thinking has evolved.
2. Methodology for Structured Consultation Process

In the past year, we conducted over 50 exploratory conversations, primarily semi-structured interviews. During each conversation, we shared our work and thinking to date, garnered advice and input, and identified areas for further consideration. The consultation process prioritized listening to representatives from the Global South, focused on questions of power and systemic inequality, and included a diversity of experts and specialists. Initial interviewees were identified through existing relationships and networks, with further interviewees identified through recommendations and introductions. Considering that our own thinking and ideas developed as we moved through the process, specific discussion topics varied slightly. Notes were compiled after each conversation and collectively analyzed to identify major themes.

Our structured consultation process included a wide, diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Nevertheless, it cannot be taken as fully representative, nor does this report reflect the richness, depth, and complexities of every conversation.

We recognize that the more perspectives we hear, the richer and more nuanced our understanding will become, which will subsequently help us make the Gender Fund stronger and more effective. As we move into the next stages of the Gender Fund’s development and implementation, we are committed to a continued learning process in collaboration with others, most significantly our current and future program partners.
3. What we heard

3.1 Main themes

We are at a momentous time in history. Time and time again, we heard that our present moment offers an opportunity to be catalytic to a degree previously not possible. The racial reckoning and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and globally, shone a light on a long overdue discussion about racism and colonialist legacies. We heard about the unprecedented ways in which COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated systemic, deep-rooted inequalities in society, especially the disproportionate way it has affected women and girls. Despite this, COVID-19 recovery plans continue to ignore the gendered dimensions, risking further entrenchment of discriminatory systems. We also heard of the transformative opportunity the pandemic has created to re-imagine how we address these systems. Throughout conversations, consultees raised the urgent need to leverage current global moments such as the Generation Equality Forum – which marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the ten-year countdown towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – to drive rapid advancement towards gender equality.

Funding for implementation of programs matters, but it is equally important to invest in organizational strengthening.

Achieving gender equality requires a systemic response. We heard that since the barriers to equality are systemic, the solutions must be too, and that any effort to achieve gender equality must fully acknowledge the social and cultural norms that produce and uphold gender inequality. Many consultees emphasized that attitudes and beliefs as well as deeply entrenched power structures that exclude women and girls present the greatest barriers to progress. Feminist approaches analyze power dynamics and differentials within systems and structures, providing solutions that seek to shift the status-quo in order to achieve gender equality, and as such, are inherently focused on systems change. We also heard acknowledgement that systems change is a complex and lengthy process that does not progress in a linear trajectory and requires long-term commitments and investments.

Feminist movements and women’s rights organizations play a vital role in systems change. A core theme of our conversations was the importance of working with grass roots and locally led groups. Women’s rights organizations and feminist movements have played a catalytic role in bringing about systemic change and play a unique part in both sparking action and ensuring accountability from leaders and decision-makers. Consultees highlighted the important role that women’s funds play at the global, regional, and national level to support, accompany and collectively build feminist movements. Despite this, many consultees highlighted that these movements have been historically under supported.

Feminist movements and women’s rights organizations have received very little funding. Feminist movements and women’s rights organizations have been historically underfunded. Moreover, the funding they have received has been for specific projects rather than for organizational strengthening and core costs. Movements build movements, not donors.
However, donors can provide critical resources to sustain a healthy ecosystem of movements. We also heard about the importance of addressing the vicious cycle of absorptive capacity within women’s rights organizations and feminist movements. As these groups have received limited, restrictive, and inadequate investment in their organizational capabilities, they are often unable to apply to larger grants. As a result, there is an urgent need to invest in the critical capabilities and systems to build resilient organizations. Consultees noted that investment was needed not only for operations, but also for building solidarity across movements by funding spaces and platforms for partnership and collaboration. Funding for implementation of programs matters, but it is equally important to invest in organizational strengthening, including strategy-building with the long-term view of ensuring a strong, resilient, and sustainable ecosystem of organizations. Finally, many consultees noted that feminist movements should not be understood as exclusively small and grassroots – many operate on large, global, and regional levels.

Funding proximal, locally-rooted organizations was seen as valuable because they bring the contextual knowledge, understanding of political economy, and relationships needed to make lasting change.

Invest in promoting women’s leadership through changes in institutional policies and practices. Another major theme that resonated was the need to transform laws, cultural norms, and institutional practices to create pathways to intersectional leadership for women collectively, instead of merely building individual women’s capacities. Experts also noted that leadership needs to be supported at all levels, from household and community to institutions and government. Conversations on this topic highlighted the importance of a systemic approach, of analyzing power dynamics, and of transforming restrictive norms. Representation of women in leadership positions was discussed as a necessary but insufficient condition for change, which depends not only on numbers but also on inclusivity of systems and models of leadership, including feminist leadership. We heard about the importance of local and youth leadership, and questions were posed around how to identify and support future leaders earlier. Notably, consultees encouraged us to anticipate and manage backlash when promoting women’s leadership and incorporating men and masculinities into the work.

Adopting an intersectional approach that is cognizant of context is a fundamental requirement for systems change. Discussions covered the wide range of identity characteristics that an intersectional lens enables us to recognize and consider, while pointing out that the relevance of particular characteristic shifts in relation to context. We know, for example, that poverty has a gendered dimension, but we also need to consider other factors that magnify vulnerabilities and discrimination – for example, how critical race and class is in countries like Brazil and South Africa, the experiences of indigenous populations in much of Latin America, and the role of caste in India. We also need to consider factors like employment status – the majority of the informal workers are women and girls and they are without any benefits or social protections, and now most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. We also heard the need to consider age – adolescent girls are some of the most
marginalized and disempowered groups, not only as stakeholders, but as knowledge-bearers and constituents. We also heard that it is crucial to clarify the approaches, definitions and values that drive Co-Impact’s work, particularly when it comes to complex concepts such as gender, feminism, and intersectionality.

**Funding should be directed to organizations in the Global South.** The vast majority of funding reaches Global North countries first before trickling down. The funding that does go directly to the Global South organizations is largely project-based, with extremely limited funding available for systems change approaches. Co-Impact’s commitment to ensure 100% of country-level grants go to Global South-rooted organizations was recognized by consultees as particularly powerful. Funding proximal, locally-rooted organizations was seen as valuable because they bring the contextual knowledge, understanding of political economy, and relationships needed to make lasting change. Consultees noted that we should encourage Global South and Global North partnerships, to both contribute to more equitable partnerships, encourage learning, and avoid isolation of Global South groups. This is aligned with Co-Impact’s transition to becoming a truly global organization, where teams are being grown out in the regions where we work, and grantmaking decisions are being devolved. Overall, our long-term, context-based, partner-centric, and intersectional approach to funding, along with our commitment to organizational support and our prioritization of women-led organizations, received strong support and encouragement.

Adopting an intersectional approach that is cognizant of context is a fundamental requirement for systems change.

**To achieve any form of social change, evidence matters.** Yet when it comes to gender equality, there is a dearth of data. Data gaps and a pervasive lack of disaggregation by sex and other demographic characteristics point to the chronic lack of investment and understanding in this area. This presents a profound challenge for those attempting to create change, as without a robust body of evidence it is difficult to demonstrate what needs to change and how it can be done. Throughout the consultation process we talked about the kind of evidence that is required to make institutional shifts and encourage additional funding streams, with many pointing out that data needs to be driven by demand and owned by those who use it. We also discussed evidence in relation to Co-Impact’s own work, noting the importance of sharing our research, learning and analysis, and identifying gaps in existing data. This includes creating a supportive environment with partners to be candid about what works and doesn’t, and to learn from failure. It was also highlighted that it is important to strike a balance between showing impact and adapting to the needs of those organizations and initiatives that do not fit neatly into traditional evaluation or impact measurement frameworks.
3.2 What has evolved in our thinking?

Expanding a more holistic and comprehensive set of outcomes. We updated and expanded the goals and outcomes for the Gender Fund as a result of these structured conversations. Co-Impact’s commitment to centering gender equality and women’s leadership across all levels of systems change was seen as important. This includes how problems are analyzed, programs are designed, outcomes defined, and measurement undertaken, as well as governance and decision-making. In addition to emphasizing gender-equitable and women’s leadership outcomes, we included outcomes related to women and girls’ power and agency and gender-positive social norms. We also recognize that it is not just important to increase the number of women leaders, but crucially also to ensure that women’s leadership has an individual and collective voice, influence, and decision-making power. We also incorporated a rights-based approach for systems change and strengthened support for pathways that include intersectional and feminist leadership models and undervalued domains that center women’s experiences, such as feminist economics.

Evolving and refining our theory of change. Heavily informed by these consultations, we re-articulated the Gender Fund’s theory of change (see Appendices) to better demonstrate how we believe change happens and what is needed to advance gender equality. Our refined theory of change articulates what we will fund, who we will support, and how we will support organizations. Co-Impact recognizes that long-term, systemic change happens in diverse ways and requires a range of organizations working on different aspects of structural gender barriers. As such, our theory of change is broad enough to allow for a diversity of program partner approaches with their own theories of change that are context and issue specific. We are also refining our partner selection criteria and processes accordingly.

The dearth of data is an obstacle to gender equitable outcomes and, sometimes, an excuse for lack of progress.

Developing an ecosystem approach to grantmaking. Our ecosystem approach aims to help program partners shift power and agency towards women and girls particularly those historically disadvantaged and marginalized by public and market systems. Systems change involves addressing restrictive and discriminatory norms, changing the rules of the game i.e., who has power and voice, whose voice is included and has influence. Improving systems to be just, effective, and inclusive requires a combination of technically sound solutions, advocacy for policy reform, reinforcement of governance and accountability mechanisms, and catalytic approaches for changing gender norms and challenging the status quo. As such, our approach to grantmaking is designed to support the deep and long-term work done by a diverse group of actors who know how to play the ‘inside-outside’ game in their respective contexts. These include civil society groups, think-tanks and academic institutions, professional associations and networks, women’s rights groups, and feminist and allied movements based in the Global South, among others. As noted above, we recognize the importance of supporting a diversity (or ecosystem) of actors as well as maintaining a flexible approach to our grantmaking.
Refining our approach to influencing funding. A key message from the consultations was the need to “grow the pie” for gender equality funding. In addition to advocating for increased funding for locally-rooted, primarily women-led organizations, and making funding more significant, supportive, flexible, and longer term, we are exploring how to best partner with others to support ongoing efforts to grow overall funding for gender equality and promote increased resources towards organizations led and governed by underrepresented groups.

Systems change involves addressing restrictive and discriminatory norms, changing the rules of the game i.e., who has power and voice, whose voice is included and has influence.

Tackling the barriers to gender equality. Girls and women face a number of critical barriers to advancing their rights and wellbeing which have only been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues are context specific and compounded by other factors of discrimination such as race, caste, ethnicity, class, disability, and sexual identity, among others. Common barriers include gender-based violence, lack of safety, curtailed reproductive rights, and the burden of unpaid care and work – including lack of quality childcare and early childhood development services. We will aim to find the right balance of focusing on these barriers while maintaining our program partner-centered approach, i.e., supporting our partners to identify both what they consider important and where there are opportunities for large-scale change. Accordingly, we will actively signal interest in funding initiatives that address country-specific barriers to gender equality, even as we make clear that we are open to funding other issues considered critical by prospective program partners.

3.3 What are we exploring further?

Our governance structure. We value – and are designing our governance structure to include – the perspectives of independent experts, practitioners and advocates and the donors who are coming together to support the work of the Gender Fund, with parity in numbers and shared decision-making. Board members and advisors will be leaders who bring substantive and diverse expertise and experience in gender equality and large-scale change in a range of countries and sectors. Explicit steps will be taken to ensure a diverse group who bring a variety of experiences, expertise, age (including representation of young people), geographies, and perspectives, with particular representation from the Global South.

Our approach to evidence and learning. We recognize that advancement of gender equality, systems change, and women’s leadership is complex, non-linear, and sometimes difficult to measure. Previous pushes have avoided these notoriously thorny issues by prioritizing more “traditional” goals, indicators, and metrics. We are revising and refining our own learning, monitoring, and evaluation (LME) systems, including learning from feminist LME models. During the consultations we heard repeatedly that the dearth of data is an obstacle to gender equitable outcomes and, sometimes, an excuse for lack of progress. We hope that our partner-centric, context-specific approach will generate evidence to help our program partners continually improve their work. We strive to support our partners and
our own LME systems to be inclusive and supportive of approaches that are driven by those typically excluded from systems and learning. Over time, we plan to create and share widely a robust body of evidence - informed and connected with global and regional expertise - of what works to help improve practice overall and contribute to the global advocacy agenda. We also hope to learn from and collaborate with other organizations and funders to tackle collectively some of the challenges of supporting evidence in the gender equality field.

In addition to advocating for increased funding for locally-rooted, primarily women-led organizations, and making funding more significant, supportive, flexible, and longer term, we are exploring how to best partner with others to support ongoing efforts to grow overall funding for gender equality.

**Operationalizing our ecosystem approach.** Moving forward from the consultations, we are currently in the process of developing our sourcing approaches for global, regional, and country-level grants. As part of this, we will take on board inputs from the consultations on how best to clearly and transparently communicate our selection criteria and process and allow for a diverse range of actors to be funded. We recognize the importance of working with other funds, networks, and actors who have a track record and experience in this field. We see this as a tremendous opportunity for Co-Impact to learn from them and hope to be able to contribute to field-building based on our unique approach and funding model.

Some consultees noted the absence of regions and countries of grant-making focus, such as the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as of critical issues such as the women, peace and security agenda. We recognize that there is very important work taking place in regions and countries and on critical issues outside our focus areas. However, we believe that, like all funders, focusing our work on a fewer set of countries enables us to build a deeper contextual understanding of the ecosystem within each region/country and take an integrated approach to grantmaking and relationship building. We are also aware that there are many critical gender equality issues that deserve funding and attention, but we do not have the expertise, networks, resources, and contextual knowledge to support work in all important issues.
4. Conclusion

Thanks to our consultees’ generosity, this process has been an invaluable learning experience for Co-Impact during the development of the Gender Fund. Our rich conversations identified the opportunity presented by this unique moment in time for advancing gender equality, as well as the systemic approach required to realize the full promise. We discussed the vital role of feminist organizations and movements and the importance of direct funding to the Global South, as well as women’s leadership, intersectionality, contextualization, and evidence.

Guided by these conversations, we developed a more holistic and comprehensive set of outcomes, refined our theory of change, developed an ecosystem approach to our grantmaking that will allow us to fund a diversity of Global South actors contributing to intersectional gender systems change, and evolved our thinking around the barriers to gender equality. We will continue to explore many of the topics highlighted through this process, including our governance structure, our evidence and learning, our ecosystem approach, our advocacy for more and better philanthropic resources for gender equality, and continue to build out our partnerships and collaborations.

This report summarizes what we heard and what we’ve learned from our structured consultations to date. We are committed to continuing on this learning journey and hope that our upcoming roundtable will provide an opportunity to have deeper discussions on some of these topics. We also hope that we can continue to seek your expertise, advice, and guidance – both informally and through the formal governance structures we are currently putting in place.

We expect to announce the Gender Fund at the Generation Equality Forum in June 2021 and launch it by the end of the year. Until then, we are focusing on sourcing and grant-making and will seek your advice, networks, and dissemination channels to identify Global South organizations with the potential to enable systemic change towards gender equality. We are also continuing towards our ambitious fundraising goal and are committed to bringing more funding into this space and advancing equitable philanthropic giving for gender equality. We remain mindful of the scarcity of funding that tends to pit gender equality organizations against one another as competitors for limited funds.

Finally, we are grateful to those who gifted us with their time, generosity, critical feedback, and guidance. We know this is just the beginning and look forward to continued learning and collaboration for a more just and fairer world for women and girls.
Appendices

This list includes all people who were part of the structured consultation process and agreed to be listed. It is important to note that this report reflects Co-Impact’s interpretation of a series of structured conversations that were incredibly nuanced, deep, and varied. It does not aim to capture each one, is not representative of everything we heard and may not represent the views of each consultee. Co-Impact has consulted informally with many others who are not listed here since they were not part of the structured process of consultations. We are also incredibly grateful to those who have informally but substantially informed our thinking.

Appendix A: List of individuals consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Binagwaho</td>
<td>University of Global Health Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amie Batson and Michele Barry</td>
<td>WomenLift Health</td>
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<td>Andrea Dicks, Jess Tomlin, Jess Houssian, and Melinda Wells</td>
<td>Equality Fund</td>
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<td>Anita Bhatia, Sarah Hendriks</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
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<td>(Dr) Ashok Dyalchand</td>
<td>Institute of Health Management Pachod</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bina Agarwal</td>
<td>University of Manchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brendan Wynne</td>
<td>The Five Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caren Grown</td>
<td>World Bank Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Dr) Catherine Kyobutungi</td>
<td>African Population and Health Research Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cecile Richards</td>
<td>Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Planned Parenthood Action Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denise Dunning</td>
<td>Rise Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denise Hirao</td>
<td>Independent consultant specialized in women’s human rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fanta Toure-Puri</td>
<td>Girls First Fund</td>
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<td>Florence Tercier Holst-Roness</td>
<td>Ledunfly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Françoise Moudouthe</td>
<td>AWDF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hakima Abbas, Priscilla Hon, and Tenzin Dolker</td>
<td>AWID</td>
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<td>Halla Tómasdóttir</td>
<td>The B Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iris Bohnet</td>
<td>Harvard Kennedy School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Fuller</td>
<td>Google.org</td>
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Janet Mbugua  Inua Dada Foundation
(Dr) J. Jarpa Dawuni  Institute for African Women in Law
Jessica Horn  Akiiki Consulting
Keely Tongate and Annie Hillar  PAWHR
Lakshmi Narayan  KKPKP
Lakshmi Sundaram  openDemocracy
Latanya Mapp Frett  Global Fund for Women
Laura García  Global Greengrants Fund
(Dr) Lina AbiRafeh  Arab Institute for Women
Mabel van Oranje  Girls Not Brides
Maria Eitel  Girl Effect
Martha (Marty) Chen  Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
Mayra Buvinic  UN Foundation
(Amb.) Melanne Verveer  Seneca Women; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
Mirta Moragas Mereles  Las Ramonas
Mónica Roa  Monica Roa Consulting
Naila Kabeer  International Association for Feminist Economics
Naisola Likimani  SheDecides
Ndidi Nwuneli  Sahel Consulting
Nice Nailantei Leng’ete  Amref Health/ NPF
Renana Jhabvala  Self-Employed Women’s Association
(Dr) Roopa Dhatt & Sarah Hillware  Women in Global Health
Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini and France Bognon  International Civil Society Action Network
Sandra Macias del Villar, Esther Lever, and Zohra Moosa  Mama Cash
Sankara Caroline Gitau  Akili Dada
Sarah Hawkes and Kent Buse  UCL
Sodfa Daaji  African Legal Think Tank on Women’s Rights, NALA
Solomé Lemma and Katherine Zavala  Thousand Currents
Stephanie Kimou  PopWorks Africa
Theo Sowa  Equality Fund, ex-AWDF
Vera Songwe  UN Economic Commission for Africa
Winnie Byanyima  UNAIDS
CORE PROBLEMS
• Systems are inequitable, ineffective and exclusionary.
• Women and girls are excluded from leadership and decision-making.
• Funding focuses on addressing symptoms, rather than root causes of the problem.

ROOT CAUSES
We believe the root causes of these problems are systemic:
- Structural barriers and inherent bias within systems limit women and girls from having equitable access to rights, resources and opportunities, and from exercising power and agency.
- Women are excluded from leadership and decision-making. Bias within individuals, institutions, policies, and practices undermines women’s leadership at the household, local, regional, and national levels.
- Norms and narratives perpetuate discrimination and limiting gendered narratives, low aspirations, prevent progress, and negatively impact women and girls.

OUTCOMES
Outcomes we seek in countries where we work:
People
• Improved gender-equitable outcomes in Health, Education, and Economic opportunity for 100 million people, particularly historically disadvantaged groups, in the Global South.
• Improved power and agency among women and girls.
• Increased number of women leaders with influence and agency.
Systems
• Health, Education and Economic opportunity programs are more just, inclusive, and effective.
• Law and Economics domains have improved policies and practices for women’s leadership.
• Improved social norms advance intersectional gender equality.
• Systems use evidence and are more responsive.
Organizations
• Stronger Global South rooted, majority women-led organizations.
• Strengthened practice-oriented research and learning.

Appendix B: Theory of Change
Acknowledgements

This report reflects what we heard from the structured consultation process over the past year including feedback collected during a round table discussion held in June 2021. Our deep gratitude extends to all of those who gifted us with time and invaluable feedback. In particular, we would like to thank Alexandra Garita and Lakshmi Sundaram, each of whom served in their personal capacity, for sharing thoughtful written comments, as well as other reviewers who informed our thinking outside the structured process. The collective generosity of so many feminist leaders and gender experts has challenged our thinking and deepened our commitment to gender justice.

The report has been principally authored by Alfonsina Peñaloza and Yasmin Madan, with guidance from Olivia Leland and Rakesh Rajani. Throughout this process, the content has benefited from inputs from Varja Lipovsek, Devon Jaffe-Urell, Kaila Zitron, and Geeta Rao Gupta (from Co-Impact), and Masarat Daud, Mpho Mpofu, Polly Lorelli, Rachel Firth, and Roxanna Azimy (from Global Office Consulting). The report was edited by Eleanor Gall, with layout and design undertaken by The Bull Agency.

Finally, we are also incredibly grateful to those who have informally but substantially informed our thinking.
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