

**CASE STUDY**

# **FOSTERING COLLABORATION THROUGH COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS**

# INTRODUCTION

## IMPRINT

## UN WOMEN

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women [lead, participate in and benefit equally](#) from governance systems; Women have [income security, decent work and economic autonomy](#); All women and girls live a life free [from all forms of violence](#); and Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in [building sustainable peace and resilience](#), and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and [humanitarian action](#). UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work on advancing gender equality.

## GENERATION EQUALITY

Generation Equality is a multistakeholder initiative convened by UN Women in partnership with civil society, youth, governments, the private sector and philanthropists to catalyse partners, increase investments, drive results and accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Generation Equality is anchored in the UN Decade of Action. It emphasizes the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to benefit women and girls in all their diversity.

View the report at: <https://commitments.generationequality.org/annual-report>

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The Generation Equality Forums, held in 2021 in Mexico City and Paris to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), emerged as a global multi-stakeholder initiative to accelerate the fight for gender equality. Generation Equality established concrete commitments and action plans for the period from 2021 to 2026. It aims to catalyse global action at local, national, and regional levels, spark intergenerational conversations, drive increased public and private investment, and improve accountability. To coordinate and implement commitments, the Forums brought together stakeholders in six [Actions Coalitions](#) and a [Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action](#).

In the lead-up to the Generation Equality Forum, public and private sector stakeholders from around the world participated in a series of co-design and planning sessions. A distinctive feature of this process was the way stakeholders recognized the need for a shared agenda and collaborative responses to the complex causes of gender inequality. These sessions resulted in 31 collectives, in which multiple stake-

holders pledged to work collaboratively to achieve a shared purpose. Each of these collectives made several commitments to Generation Equality to be implemented by all their members. Collectives gather diverse stakeholders, including Generation Equality members and external partners, to advance a shared agenda. Given the members involved in these commitments, they usually involve ambitious objectives with an extensive reach and impact.

As the year 2023 marks the mid-term period of Generation Equality, this is an opportune moment for collective reflection on progress, challenges, lessons learned and opportunities for the future. This case study analyses Generation Equality's collective commitments, drawing insights from the 2023 Commitments Reporting Survey and through a series of key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted in August 2023 with the Global Alliance for Care (GAC)<sup>1</sup>, the Accelerator for GBV Prevention (The Accelerator)<sup>2</sup>, and the Alliance for Feminist Movements (AFM)<sup>3</sup>, to explore the origins of, and progress towards, the collective commitments that have emerged from Generation Equality.



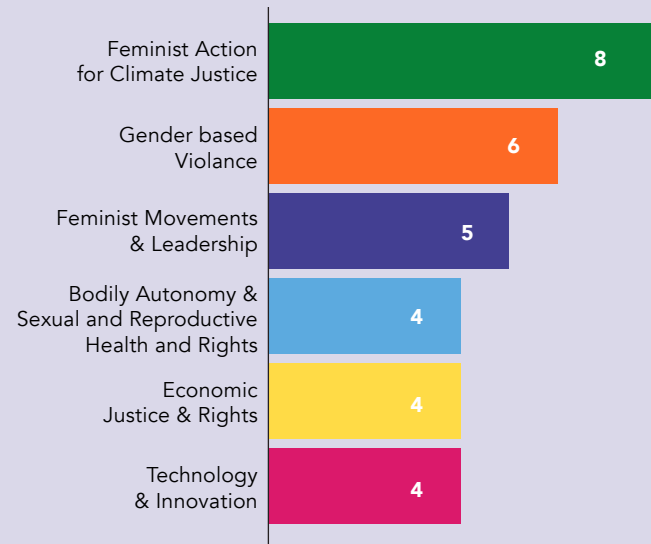
Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

- 1 Global Alliance for Care: To contribute to women's economic empowerment and the rights of caregivers and receivers by promoting horizontal learning and advocating for the creation of comprehensive care policies and systems, the transformation of gender roles and economic recovery.
- 2 The Accelerator for GBV Prevention: To bring together the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention community to advocate for funding and policies to prevent GBV. They promote the need to increase investment in evidence-based policies and programmes, by at least \$500 million by 2026.
- 3 Alliance for Feminist Movements: To support women's rights and feminist movements globally, advocating for more and better funding and mobilizing political support.

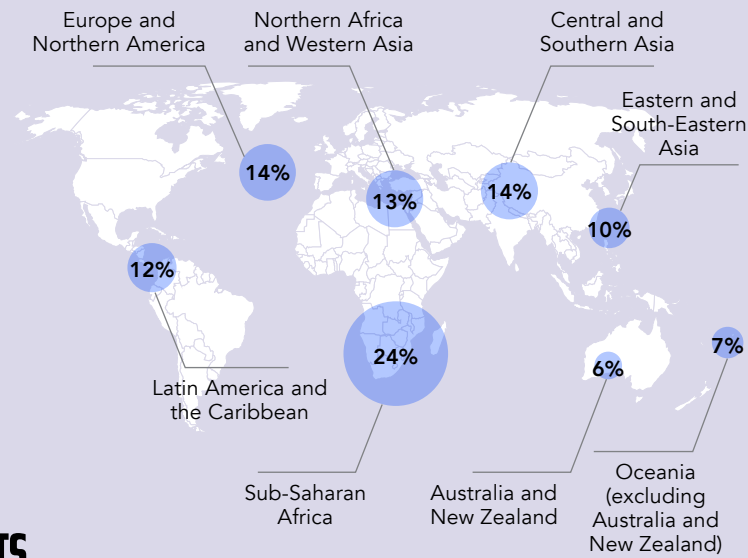
# KEY FINDINGS

Generation Equality participants made **31 collective commitments**, distributed across all six Action Coalitions.

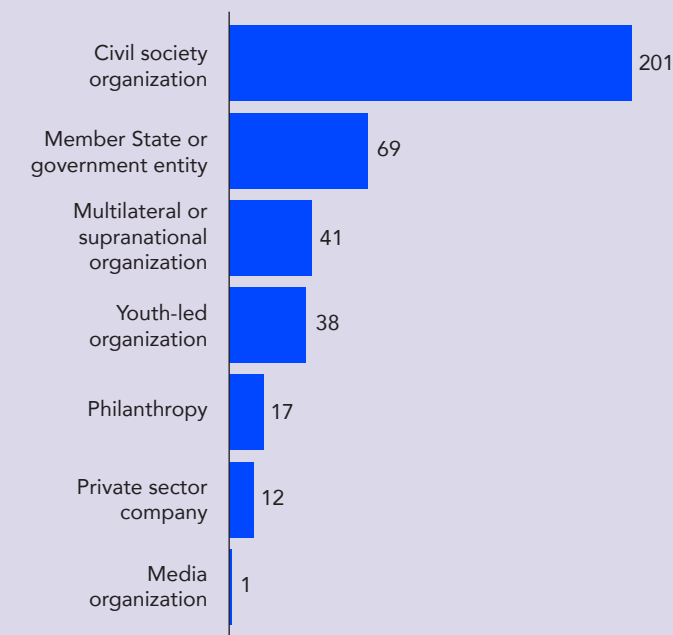
## DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS, BY ACTION COALITION



## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ORGANIZATIONS' COMMITMENTS TO COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS



## BREAKDOWN OF ORGANIZATIONS' COMMITMENTS TO COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS BY ORGANIZATION TYPE



**82%** of collective Commitment Makers are from civil society organizations (CSOs), government actors and multilateral organizations

**79%** of commitments made by collectives are in progress

**87%** of commitments made by collectives are "on track"

**82%** of commitments involving collectives were made with new or expanded partnerships

Source: Data are from the [Commitments Dashboard](#) and the second annual [Commitments Reporting Survey](#).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Overall, 42 per cent of Commitment Makers have reported (compared to 26 per cent in 2022) on 69 per cent of commitments (more than double last year's reporting rate of 31 per cent of commitments). Despite some methodological limitations, the high survey response rate provides a robust reporting on commitments for an accounting and better understanding of progress made over the past two years. See [Generation Equality 2023 report - Technical Note](#) for details.

### 1 Progress on collective commitments requires a framework and well-resourced co-creation process.

Impacted by the lack of an initial framework for cooperation at the inception of Generation Equality, collective commitments such as the AFM and The Accelerator acknowledged the lack of a blueprint as an opportunity. They then took the time to engage in a co-creative process to establish a framework that worked for them, factoring in time for a well-thought-out and intentional co-creation process that builds on earlier experiences, but with clear objectives and motivations. They also worked collectively to generate and strengthen partnerships and build trust, allowing for horizontal and flexible work dynamics, including a 'light' organizational structure that facilitates collective and participatory decision-making, and promotes the sharing of experiences and good practices. For example, founding members of the AFM took time to establish a theory of change through an extensive consultation process with CSOs.



### 2 Analysed collective commitments are harnessing expertise and inspiring complementary initiatives.

Their established organizational structures have enabled these collective commitments to become spaces that concentrate expertise on specific issues. Despite their short time in operation, many collectives have gained recognition as 'experts in the field' from important actors, such as governments and international foundations, which in some cases has resulted in collaboration or consultations with these actors. For example, The Accelerator has gained significant traction given their expertise in addressing GBV prevention in advising governments on funding for preventing GBV. As a result, and to make this expertise more widely accessible, they launched the "What Counts" project that generates and tracks data about the funds for GBV prevention. Certain elements vary between the collectives, including how closely they work with UN Women and their level of independence from Generation Equality structures. The AFM, for example, has since evolved as a complementary, yet separate, multi-stakeholder partnership initiative that remains closely linked to Generation Equality through the Feminist Movements and Leadership Action Coalition structures. Meanwhile, the GAC has established numerous initiatives, engaging multiple stakeholders, such as government institutions and CSOs that are not part of Generation Equality.



### 3 Progress has in some cases been negatively impacted by mostly virtual (rather than face-to-face) interactions.

The AFM and The Accelerator appreciated the co-creative, mostly virtual process of establishing their objectives and goals. However, the lack of in-person engagement with members of the collective commitments resulted in prolonged inception periods and a slow start to implementation.





# ANALYSIS OF COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS

## *The origin and qualities of collective commitments*

**Generation Equality sparked organizations to create multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve a common purpose.** During the Generation Equality inception period, and in some cases even before, stakeholders had several conversations about their objectives, activities and strategies, concerns and project ideas to advance gender equality. Stakeholders realized they had many similarities and started discussing the possibility of unifying efforts to achieve more ambitious objectives and advance specific and complex issues that perpetuate gender inequality. Some stakeholders identified the joint need to delve deeper into more nuanced issues by increasing the frequency of interaction, level of coordination and co-created activities. The networks that were forming learned from and replicated the Action Coalition's multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary approach and acknowledged the necessity of sharing resources and coordinating actions, given the extent of the challenges ahead.

**The stakeholders saw Generation Equality as a political opportunity to collectively achieve gender equality, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** There was a sense that the timing was favourable for significant collective action on the topics around which several collective commitments were formed. In the case of the GAC, "care" gained attention after the COVID-19 pandemic showed the higher care and domestic workload shouldered by women compared to men. In the case of AFM and The Accelerator, the demand for structural changes within the development sector had increased in the last few years. Hence, their initiatives to transform relationships between donors and recipients, invest in evidence-based solutions, and put women activists and grass-roots actors at the centre were well received. Across collective commitments, a shared sense of urgency played a key role in bringing collaborators together.

5 AFM. 2022d.

**Generation Equality collective commitments are diverse, each having developed distinctive features relevant to their context and ways of working.** Initially, membership was made up exclusively of Generation Equality Commitment Makers, but the collectives have expanded to other internal and external actors in the last two years. **The approach to collaboration with UN Women also varies among collectives.** The GAC works very closely with UN Women, mainly because UN Women is one of GAC's founding members. By contrast, AFM and The Accelerator operate more independently. **Collectives have their own organizational structure,** through which they make decisions, coordinate and distribute work. The main decision-making body in the GAC is a General Assembly. The AFM and The Accelerator have a Steering Group<sup>5</sup> and an Advisory Group, respectively, which also overlook the strategic and programmatic functioning of the collective and ensures accountability. The GAC and The Accelerator also count on the guidance and technical support of a Management Committee and a Technical Secretariat (GAC) as well as the Steering Group and a Technical Working Group (The Accelerator).

**Being part of a network of partners and allies who share an advocacy agenda has numerous benefits.** The collectives consulted highlight: 1) the exchange of learnings and best practices; 2) access to the latest data and innovative research on the topic; 3) opportunities to amplify the message and impact of other members; and 4) a more efficient allocation of resources as key benefits. Collectives are made up of stakeholders who are experts on the subject from different fields and backgrounds. The added value of the collectives is the sum of their knowledge, efforts, resources and areas of influence. The reach of these commitments goes beyond national borders, having an impact at regional and international levels. In the case of the collectives consulted, their reach is global, having members from all continents and a particular concentration in Europe, North America and Africa.

## *Progress of collective commitments*

**According to the 2023 GE Survey, 79 per cent of commitments that are part of a collective are in progress,** while 8 per cent are in the "planning stage" and 6 per cent "completed." This aligns with the finding that 87 per cent of commitments made by collectives are reported as "on track," meaning they are expected to be completed on the planned schedule. Reported advances include: 1) the growth and consolidation of their groups; 2) their positioning as experts in the topics they work on; 3) the creation of social awareness; and 4) their contribution to legal and public policy changes.

**Two years after the launch of Generation Equality, the collectives consulted have grown significantly, their membership more than tripling.** When the GAC was launched in July 2021, it had 40 members;<sup>6</sup> it now has over 150<sup>7</sup> and interest in joining the alliance continues to grow. Meanwhile, the AFM started with 150 members during the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2022,<sup>8</sup> while today, it has more than 400 members. This level of growth shows the continuous work of the collectives in creating and maintaining alliances with various stakeholders. Both the establishment and institutionalization of the collectives have required a considerable amount of effort. In the case of the AFM, their commitment to Generation Equality was the creation of the collective itself, and they accomplished their primary objective in their first year. This gives them a chance to further advance their mandate and contribute to a more robust development field that recognizes women activists and grass-roots actors as central drivers of social change.

**All three of the collectives consulted discussed how they've established their position as global experts on the respective gender issues they work on:** women's empowerment, care policies and systems, feminist investment, and GBV prevention. The collectives have consolidated the latest data, knowledge and know-how in their respective fields. In only a few years, the GAC has helped bolster a global care systems agenda and position it as one of the more transformative ways to advance gender equality. Its work has contributed to growing interest in other regions, particularly Africa and Europe, taking the learnings from pioneering efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean region. GAC members have also taken research on 'care' to the practical

6 UN Women. 2021.

7 GAC. Undated.

8 Equality Fund. 2022.

9 Inter-American Commission of Women. 2022.

10 Addati, L., Cattaneo, U., & Pozzan, E. 2022.

11 The Accelerator. Undated.

and policymaking arena, creating numerous resources aimed at policymakers and other relevant social actors to guide them on how to build care societies. These resources inform debates and provide insights for the design and implementation of measures aimed at recognizing, reducing and redistributing care work. To name some examples, the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission of Women produced the "Inter-American Model Law on Care" (2022)<sup>9</sup> a guide that aims to strengthen States' regulatory frameworks related to labour, social protection and women's economic empowerment. And as a direct contribution to the GAC and Generation Equality agenda, the International Labour Organization published the report *Care at Work: Investing in Care Leave Policies and Care Services for a More Gender Equal World of Work*,<sup>10</sup> which presents research about global progress on laws and policies related to care in the last decade and proposes policy recommendations. Meanwhile, The Accelerator and AFM noted recognition by stakeholders, including government bodies and philanthropic organizations, as proof of their rise as global leaders. For instance, The Accelerator was invited to collaborate in constructing and reviewing the "United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally". Moreover, when The Accelerator launched the "What Counts"<sup>11</sup> project - which aims to generate and track the data about funding for GBV prevention - they received more than 100 member applications from leading stakeholders in the field of GBV prevention. In the words of one member of The Accelerator: "Governments and donors invite us to their networks. They see us as partners and come to us requesting our input... We are coordinators in the field and are confident of bringing the right people and communicating the work they are doing."

**All collectives consulted have created social awareness around the gender issues they work on through diverse strategies.** Collectives have contributed to discussions from different development spaces, such as the UN General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the SDG Summit, Women Deliver and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, collectives have implemented workshops, webinars, campaigns and other activities to amplify their message. For example, the GAC has co-organ-

ized the global workers campaign “Invest in care”<sup>12</sup> and pushed to establish the “International Day of Care and Support”, which was commemorated for the first time on 29 October 2023.<sup>13</sup> In the case of The Accelerator, members have created social awareness and exchanged best GBV prevention practices through their “Our Future is Fearless”<sup>14</sup> and “16 Days of Activism” campaigns, as well as through consultations with stakeholders from South-West Asia and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia.

**Finally, the collectives have pushed for the transformation and creation of laws and public policies that contribute to gender equality.** Members of the collectives cited several laws and policies that had been a focus of their efforts, such as “Argentina’s Integral System of Care Policies”,<sup>15</sup> which was initially proposed in 2020 and is still under congressional discussion. The United Republic of Tanzania has

### Challenges facing the collectives

**Like other Commitment Makers, collectives have faced several challenges in developing their projects.** These challenges include limited financial and human resources, language barriers, lack of data to continue their work, and working in contexts where anti-rights movements and setbacks on women’s rights are rising while space for civil society is shrinking. On the other hand, collectives have also experienced particular challenges related to their collective nature and unique role in Generation Equality. The following challenges were highlighted by the collectives consulted:

- **Absence of a framework or blueprint to guide them in constructing and establishing their collectives as part of Generation Equality.** Generation Equality, the Action Coalitions and the collective commitments are the first of their kind in the gender equality space. For that reason, no document or resource was available that could guide collectives on issues like institutional development, relationship-building, fundraising and organizational issues as a collective. Consequently, they had to rely on the experiences and resources of each of their members and learn along the way which strategies and approaches

taken measures to improve water and electrical infrastructure, time-use measurement and labour conditions.<sup>16</sup> And Japan has taken action on GBV prevention by enacting and amending laws on domestic violence<sup>17</sup> and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.<sup>18</sup> A very significant accomplishment of the GAC with impact in the whole LAC region has been the “Buenos Aires Commitment”, adopted by Member States of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean at the XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (November 2022).<sup>19</sup> This commitment prompts States to recognize “care” as a right and adopt comprehensive care policies and systems, addressing the urgency to recognize, reduce and redistribute care work in our societies. In fact, the GAC is currently pushing for the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to recognize care as a human right.

work best to achieve their objectives. While this was an early challenge, it resulted in the diverse and fit-for-context institutional approaches that are now appreciated by each collective.

- **Cultivating trustful relationships with partners in the context of remote work and limited travel funding.** In-person gatherings have been limited in the last few years because of the COVID-19 pandemic and a scarce budget for travel. Nevertheless, collectives acknowledge the importance of occasional in-person spaces when developing collaborative projects with multi-stakeholder partners from around the world as experienced in gatherings at the margins of events such as the Generation Equality accountability moment at the UN General Assembly in September 2022 or the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27). Greater human contact could prove helpful in building empathy and trust among participants.
- **Lack of clarity regarding coordination with Generation Equality structures.** Questions remain about coordination mechanisms, communication channels, collaboration opportunities

within Generation Equality, and the roles and responsibilities of each of its structures. For example, at times it was unclear whether a given event or activity should be hosted or organized by a collective or/and a relevant Action Coalition. Commitment Makers who are also members of collectives do not always know whether to turn to

their Action Coalition or their collectives for certain questions or requests. While the collectives consulted for this case study have established productive routines to address such questions, establishing these patterns took time and effort earlier on, when the collectives’ work was taking shape.

### Learnings and best practices of collectives

Collective Commitment Makers have also learned valuable lessons from their experiences as collectives and as part of Generation Equality. The following insights and best practices were mentioned by the collectives consulted for this case study:

- **Horizontal and flexible working dynamics enable successful co-creation processes.** The collectives consulted aim to work collaboratively using horizontal approaches that offer all members equal consideration. The aim is that all voices, experiences, knowledge and demands are equally heard and valued. At the same time, leaders of the collectives understand that their members work in diverse contexts and have different capacities. Hence, they offer engagement opportunities that are flexible and manageable to each Commitment Maker. Commitment Makers participate only as much as they can, having unrestricted access to the network and resources of the collective. After all, members feel encouraged to participate by seeing the results of the collaborative work.
- **When building relationships with partners, deep experience, quality of work and legitimacy of leadership can generate trust.** One of the key elements for thriving relationships is trust. Collectives have been able to create trust by demonstrating and communicating about their experience, their commitment to their causes, and the outcomes of their work. Moreover, potential partners have been more receptive when they perceive the leadership has legitimacy. For example, the GAC has strong leadership from Mexico and across Latin America and the Caribbean, a region which

has pioneered many care policies and systems. Experience with these pioneering efforts has contributed positively to the perceived legitimacy of GAC’s leadership globally.

- **Intentional and well-thought-out planning can be time-consuming, but it has significant long-term benefits for highly collaborative efforts.** In the absence of a pre-existing framework or blueprint for how to build and organize a collective commitment, planning efforts initially seemed slow and difficult at times. For example, the AFM implemented multiple dialogues and surveys in three languages as part of their planning process. Members of the AFM observed that, “building on the ‘seed idea’ required many conversations, nurturing and working through confusion. There was a very intentional design effort that took a year before a formal launch.” Through these planning processes, collective Commitment Makers reflected on their positions, formed clear objectives, and established a theory of change. In addition to aligning participants around a shared purpose and guiding the collective’s actions, this effort has made it easier to communicate persuasively about the purpose and unique nature of the collective, which in turn has facilitated alliances with new members.
- **The exchange of experiences and learning maintains the innovative nature of collaborative initiatives and opens new project opportunities.** Collectives have created a range of in-person and online spaces to share experiences and learnings, keeping each other updated on the latest data

<sup>12</sup> UNI Global Union 2022.

<sup>13</sup> UN Women. 2023.

<sup>14</sup> The Accelerator. 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Argentina Government. 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Global Alliance of Care. 2023.

<sup>17</sup> From 2023 Generation Equality Survey Data: The Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims was partially amended to expand the protection order system to tackle mental harm. It will enter into effect in April 2024.

<sup>18</sup> From 2023 Generation Equality Survey Data: The Act on Prevention and Remedy of Harm Associated with Performing in Porn Videos was enacted in June 2022.

<sup>19</sup> ECLAC. 2023.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following recommendations seek to enhance the effectiveness of collective commitments:

## 1 For collective Commitment Makers:

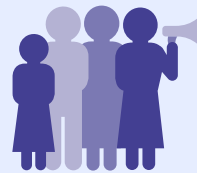
Expand and strengthen spaces to cultivate trusting relationships among stakeholders, including in-person spaces. These spaces could be leveraged for gatherings such as Women Deliver and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This action should be accompanied by financial support for travel costs to facilitate Commitment Makers, including youth-led organizations and organizations from the Global South to participate in these forums. Furthermore, collective Commitment Makers should promote and support the creation of spaces focused on the exchange of experiences and best practices within and among different Action Coalitions.



Moreover, while growing the collective is often desirable, what matters most is not the number of participants, but that the right organizations are involved and able to substantively contribute, especially paying attention to the voices of traditionally marginalized groups.

## 2 For Generation Equality stakeholders:

Recognize that not all members will be able to contribute equally, and plan accordingly. This may entail acknowledging capacity and resource differences and establishing appropriate expectations and engagement or process indicators regarding respective contributions. In so doing, collective Commitment Makers can anticipate growth opportunities and monitor how their movement-building efforts are developing over time.



## 3 For Generation Equality stakeholders:

Build awareness of the multi-stakeholder partnership approaches and particular governance structures that have enabled several collective Commitment Makers to concentrate expertise on a specific topic. Building awareness within and beyond Generation Equality which could help to clarify the distinctive movement-building role that these collectives are playing and how their work differs from more conventional policy and programmatic collaborations.



# ANNEX

## Summary of methodology

The case studies were developed through a mixed-methods scoping review process spanning five stages, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as extensive document analysis. Like other scoping reviews, the proposed methodological approach places equal priority on academic rigour and the need for a rapid and iterative process to develop relevant, timely case studies that demonstrate how Generation Equality is advancing change.

### STAGE 1.

**Inception and concept development:** First, priority themes and relevant cases were identified through consultation with the UN Women Accountability Framework team, and refined in light of a preliminary review of Generation Equality background literature. This background literature initially included the Global Acceleration Plan, the draft Action Coalition Accountability Framework, the Generation Equality Accountability Report 2022 and the descriptions of what constitutes a policy, financial and collective commitment.

### STAGE 2.

**Document analysis:** Once the study team has absorbed relevant background information, relevant documents were assembled for each case study. These documents included, for example, internal documents and public reports regarding the work of particular Action Coalitions, the text of commitments that exemplify themes of interest, and the institutional websites and blog posts of organizations that may be featured in the case studies. Preliminary findings from the 2023 Generation Equality Survey were reviewed to contextualize the trends and cases to be featured in the case study reports.

### STAGE 3.

**Data collection:** At this stage the study team conducted key informant interviews with the UN Women Accountability Framework team, Commitment Makers, Generation Equality governance structures and other actors, such as beneficiaries. Informants were selected based on four primary criteria: 1) a high degree of engagement with Generation Equality; 2) substantive participation in Generation Equality initiatives that have demonstrated advanced and progressive results; 3) the relevance of particular institutions and initiatives to the selected case study topics; and 4) representation across Action Coalitions and regions.

### STAGE 4.

**Data analysis:** Documents and interview findings were then charted, analysed thematically and summarized. The central aim of this stage was to triangulate findings from the document analysis and key informant interviews, and to contextualize these qualitative findings in light of the quantitative findings of the 2023 and 2022 Generation Equality surveys.

### STAGE 5.

**Review and finalization:** At this stage the study team produced second drafts of each case study for review by the Accountability Framework team. In addition to drawing out the distinctive features of each case, this stage of writing was also concerned with establishing a consistent voice and format across the case studies.



## Resources consulted

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