

CASE STUDY

GENERATION EQUALITY PRINCIPLES, FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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: commitments.generationequality.org/annual-report

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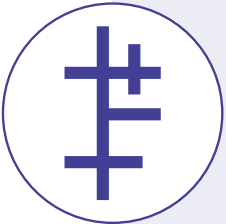
INTRODUCTION

The Generation Equality Forums, held in 2021 in Mexico City and Paris to mark the 25th 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 Forum brought together stakeholders in six [Actions Coalitions](#) and a [Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action](#).

Generation Equality is the leading initiative to bring stakeholders together to advance concrete, transformative and measurable actions that are implemented by upholding a feminist approach, focused on intersectionality, feminist leadership and transformation. These principles, put forwarded by Generation Equality stakeholders ahead of the Forum in Paris, inspire how Generation Equality operates and what it aspires to achieve.¹ While these three principles are not new to many Commitment Makers and

Compact Signatories, they have been integral to many organizations. Generation Equality stakeholders have been unified to uphold the principles and are being held accountable for adherence to them as part of their collective actions

As the year 2023 marks the mid-term period of Generation Equality, this is an opportune moment for collective reflection on progress, lessons learned, challenges and opportunities for the future. This case study analyses the three principles of Generation Equality by Commitment Makers and Compact Signatories drawing insights from the 2023 Commitments Reporting Survey and through a series of key informant interviews (KIs) conducted in August 2023 with Breakthrough India, Global Fund for Women, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), the Government of Chile, Kering Foundation, Tejiendo Pensamiento, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC), Women Enabled International (WEI), and The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) to explore the origin, understanding and practice of the three principles of Generation Equality and offer key findings and recommendations going forward.



CORE PRINCIPLES OF GENERATION EQUALITY

Intersectionality

Action Coalitions seek to put an intersectional approach into practice by shedding light on and addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that are experienced by many women and girls because of their identities, realities, backgrounds, and unequal access to power and resources. This requires recognizing the unique challenges faced by people who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and the power dynamics and systems that reinforce them, and meaningfully and intentionally working to counter them.



Feminist leadership

Feminist leadership aims to explicitly and intentionally redistribute power and responsibility in a way that is inclusive, participatory, and mindful of gender, age, race, social class, sexual orientation, ability and other intersecting identities. It involves a continuous commitment to keep vigilant about – and challenge – the (re)production of practices and behaviours that deter collaboration and proactive listening and that benefit a few at the expense of others.

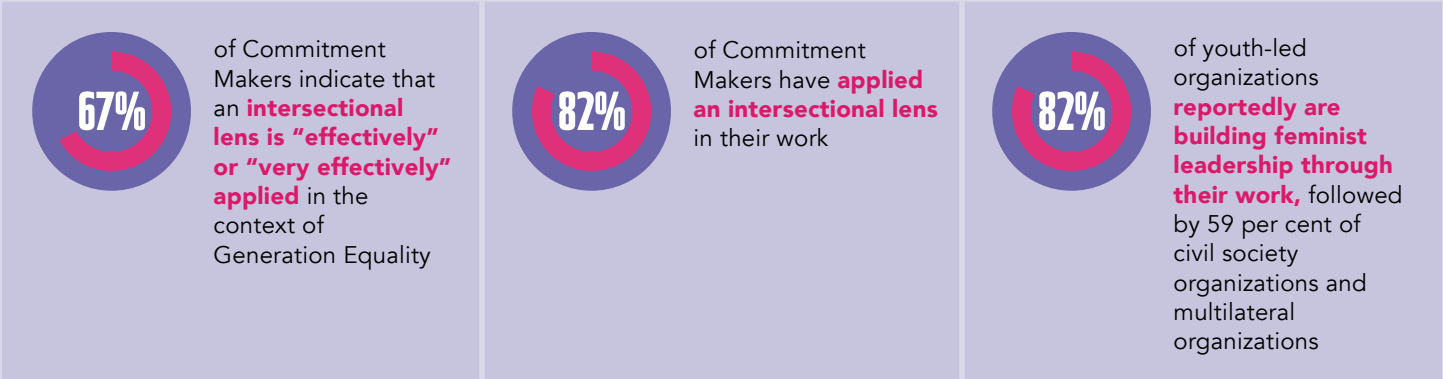


Transformation

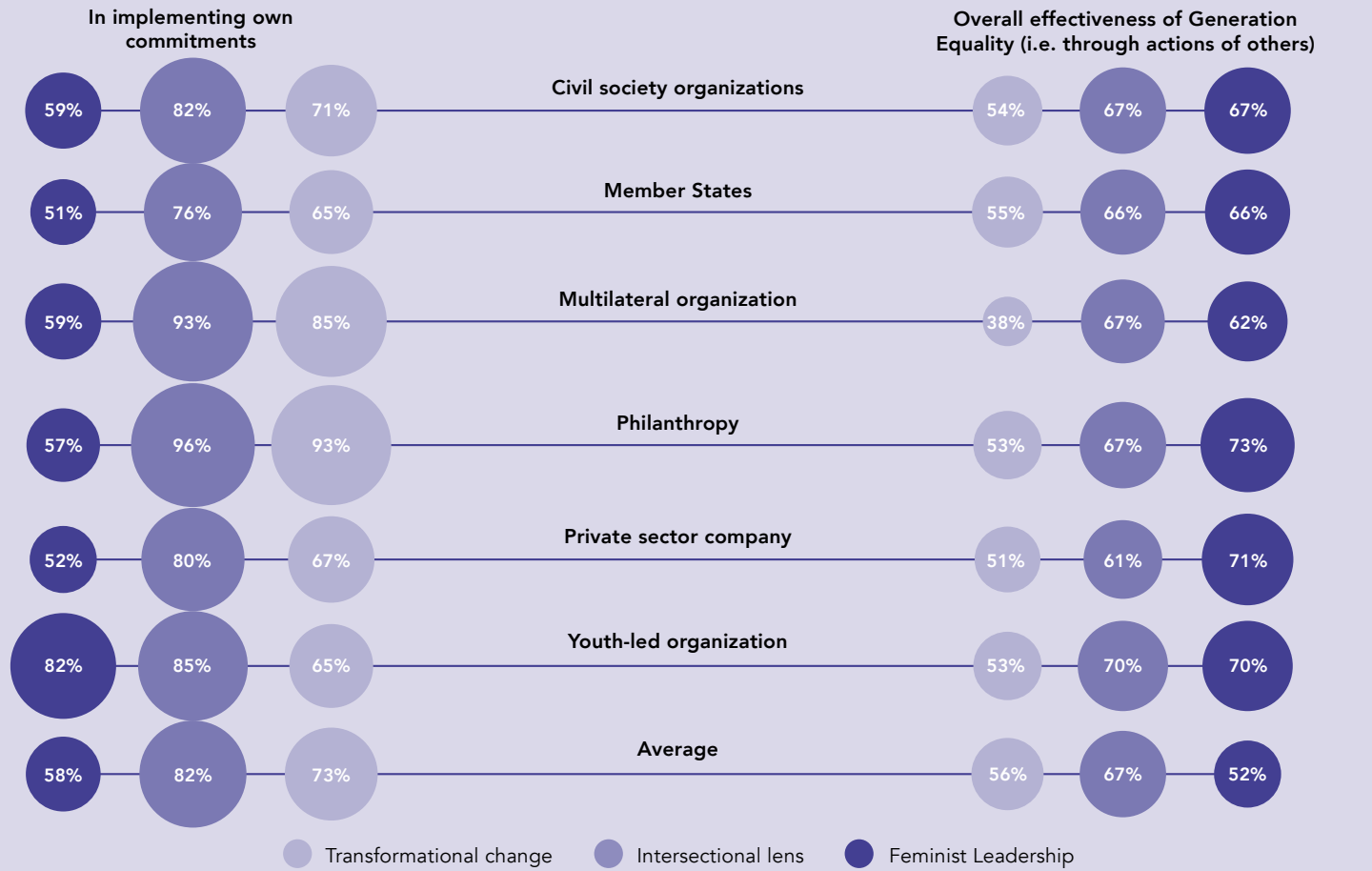
Action Coalitions seek to transform structures and systems of power that reinforce inequalities as an end goal and in their own ways of working. In so doing, the Action Coalitions seek to build a collective vision through approaches that value co-creation, dialogue, shared perspectives, and centring the voices of historically marginalized groups. Youth leadership is critical to the transformative vision of the Generation Equality Action Coalitions.

¹ See Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality: <https://commitments.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/UNW-GAP-Report-EN-web.pdf>

KEY FINDINGS



ADHERENCE TO GENERATION EQUALITY PRINCIPLES



1

Naming matters, even if enthusiasm for these principles predates Generation Equality. Commitment Makers and Compact signatories interviewed understand the core principles as the result of the work of feminist movements, progress on legal and regulatory human rights frameworks, and the evolution of national and international policies. Described as central to their routine work, these three principles are often also foundational values of their organizations, which are explicitly or implicitly identifiable in strategic plans, theories of change and development plans. Even among institutions that had embraced these principles prior to Generation Equality, Commitment Makers and Compact signatories mention the significance of naming and arriving at a collective consensus about these shared aspirations.



2

Among the three principles, 'transformation' remains the most difficult to define or accurately describe. Intersectionality is mentioned when referring to the diversity of women's identities and the intersections of experiences and systems of oppression. When naming 'feminist leadership', organizations recognize the role of CSOs as agents of change and the importance of collaborative work with them and their empowerment. However, while most organizations associate the term 'transformation' with sustained or lasting change, only a few mention shifting power structures and relations and definitions prove elusive.



3

Objective measurement of adherence to Generation Equality core principles remains challenging. Most of the organizations interviewed monitor the integration of their organizational principles in their projects through organization-wide impact monitoring. They also acknowledge the importance of measuring the adoption of principles by all stakeholders for accountability and project improvement, yet none mention a straightforward way to do so. Nevertheless, organizations note the relevance of shared definitions, complemented by the collection of relevant qualitative data.



Source: Data are from the [Commitments Dashboard](#) and the second annual [Commitments Reporting Survey](#).²

² The survey was conducted between May and July 2023. 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.

ANALYSIS OF GENERATION EQUALITY PRINCIPLES

“Our grandmothers are the ones who have mainly opened spaces of resistance for us, where the struggle has been most difficult. Now, for today’s women, the path becomes slightly easier.”
—Alejandra Nohora, Leader of the Feminist Action Coalition for Climate Justice, UN Women and Tejiendo Pensamiento

“As Palestinian women, there are different identities. We are not only women, but we are also mothers, we are vulnerable to experiencing gender-based violence, some have disabilities, and some have different gender identities and sexual orientations.”
—Randa Siniora, General Director of WCLAC

Building Generation Equality’s principles

The three Generation Equality principles, discussed and agreed upon within the six Action Coalitions during the initial period of Generation Equality, brought together Commitment Makers’ feminist and social justice ideals. They had the purpose of serving as a compass, inspiring ways of collaboration and specifying the aspirations of the collective. Even though these conversations were brief, two years later, **Commitment Makers continue to acknowledge that the principles are integral to the work of their organizations and institutions.** They understand the principles to be intertwined and essential to achieving the central purpose of Generation Equality. The three principles are largely considered “effective” and “very effective” by Commitment Makers.

The principles of “intersectionality”, “feminist leadership” and “transformation” are the result of decades of struggle by women’s, feminist and youth movements worldwide, the advancement of human rights legal frameworks, and the evolution of national and foreign policymaking. Women’s and feminist movements have been at the forefront of the struggle for gender justice and equality.

Generation Equality’s principles are integral to Commitment Makers’ approaches and foundational documents. They are explicitly or implicitly mentioned in their organizational approach,³ strategic plans,⁴ theory of change⁵ and, in the case of governments, in their national policies.^{6,7}

The Commitment Makers consulted associate “intersectionality” with the diversity of women’s identities and experiences and the layers of oppression that generate specific situations of vulnerability. This principle is explicitly mentioned in WEI’s mission, and as a core value of Chile’s commitments to Generation Equality,⁸ as well as in the strategic plans of GNWP, FEMNET and WCLAC.

Commitment Makers consulted relate “feminist leadership” with the empowerment of women activists and grass-roots organizations and their inclusion in leadership and decision-making roles. All of their foundational resources implicitly and explicitly integrate this principle in their narratives and strategies. They recognize the centrality of these actors in achieving and preserving gender equality and gender justice, given their lived experiences and direct knowledge of what happens on the ground. For example, Global Fund for Women’s strategic plan established feminist movements and grassroots organizers as decision makers and drivers of change to achieve lasting generational transformation. GNWP’s strategic plan also identifies women as critical actors in leading peace and responding to crises and outlines its commitment to enhancing young women’s leadership capacities.

“Our positioning and engagement originates in our history and experiences. The projects we work on are layered with issues around race and culture. We work in a context where most African States were colonized and where inequality comes from the global financial architecture.”
—Rachel Kaogiya, Communications & Information Lead at FEMNET

Moreover, the Commitment Makers consulted associate the principle of “transformation” with positive, long-lasting changes in the lives of women and local populations. As an example of the inclusion of the principle of “transformation”, the strategic plans of FEMNET and WCLAC stand out for clearly identifying the structural causes of the inequality and violence experienced in the context of their work. They explicitly mention patriarchy, colonialism, neoliberalism and occupation as systems of oppression, and discuss the need to transform related power relations. However, not all of them mentioned shifting power structures and relations or stated that gender injustice is layered with systems of oppression. For some, this was seen as an intrinsic reality and focus:

It is important to mention that the Compact has a broader list of six principles called “Principles of Transformation”, which have the same purpose of implementing a feminist approach towards achieving Generation Equality. These principles ground intersectionality, feminist leadership and transformation in the field of Women, Peace and Security (WPS), facilitating the analysis of conflict and humanitarian situations, and the promotion of sustainable and systemic change. The principles motivate Compact signatories to utilize a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach and develop actions that are: 1) inclusive and multistake-

holder, 2) intergenerational, 3) localized, 4) intersectional, and 5) resourced and sustainable (financial, human and technical).

Commitment Makers also utilize other feminist principles to further advance their mission and vision. Some of the principles that stand out for their creativity and bold vision are: “deep transformation model” (Breakthrough),⁹ “feminist solidarity” (FEMNET),¹⁰ “feminist philanthropy” (Global Fund for Women),¹¹ and “shared accountability” (GNWP).¹² In its “deep transformation model”, Breakthrough recognizes that in order to generate change, all members of society – individuals, families, communities and society in general – must be involved and contribute to creating an enabling environment for gender equality. To achieve these goals, the organization works closely with young people, supporting them to build their agency, leadership, and conversations with their families and communities. The seeds sown in young people are key to changing deep-rooted cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence (GBV). On the other hand, the “feminist solidarity”, applied by FEMNET, proposes a co-creation approach that considers the success of the organization’s work in building a network of resilient feminist activists and movements throughout Africa. To accomplish this, the organization invests in existing and emerging feminist spaces, strengthening their capacities.



Photo: UN Women Europe and Central Asia

3 Kering Foundation. 2023. “Our mission/ Our Governance/ How we work with our partners”; WEI (Women Enabled International). Undated. “How we work”
4 WCLAC (Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling). 2021. 2021–2025 Strategic Plan; Global Fund for Women. 2020. 2020–2023 Strategic Plan Summary; GNWP (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders). 2023. Strategic Plan 2023–2027; FEMNET (The African Women’s Development and Communications Network). 2020. The African Women’s Development and Communication Network - Strategic Vision 2020-2029.
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6 Foreign Affairs Ministry, Government of Chile. 2023. Feminist Foreign Policy.
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8 The Regional Alliance for the Digitalization of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, that reached over 1usand women in 10 countries in the region, and the National Policy for Gender Equality in Science, Technology, and Innovation.

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12 GNWP. 2023. *Strategic Plan 2023–2027, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.* p. 6.

Practice and contributions of Generation Equality's principles

According to the 2023 Generation Equality Survey, most Commitment Makers are putting the three principles of “intersectionality”, “feminist leadership”, and “transformation” into practice. While 82 per cent of Commitment Makers reported actively using intersectional lenses, 72 per cent reported explicitly challenging or interrogating power dynamics, and 58 per cent said they were building feminist leadership. The Commitment Makers who most report employing the principles were: civil society organizations, government actors, multilateral or supranational organizations and youth-led organizations, followed by the private sector, philanthropic and media organizations.

Commitment Makers are putting Generation Equality’s three principles into practice at organizational and operational levels, passing through all their project stages, from design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The interviewed Commitment Makers offer examples of these principles in practise. To begin with, they are led by women and other historically marginalized populations, including BIPOC,¹³ LGBTQI+,¹⁴ and people with disabilities. The principles guide their relationships and work dynamics within and outside their organizations and government institutions:

Commitment Makers practice “intersectionality” by integrating an analysis of the multiplicity and conjunction of women’s and other people’s identities, experiences and systems of oppression that impact them within their projects. Through this analysis, Commitment Makers are able to identify and understand the context-specific situations of risk and vulnerability in which they work. For example, the Inclusive Generation Equality Collective Initiative developed a “Feminist Accessibility Protocol”¹⁵ that calls upon governments, UN agencies and feminist organizations to create spaces accessible to and inclusive of feminists with disabilities.¹⁶ The Protocol is intended to include not only women with disabil-

ities, but also girls, trans, intersex and nonbinary persons with disabilities: “We commit to proactively ensuring the meaningful inclusion of feminists with disabilities in all of their diversity and intersections, with a particular emphasis on those who experience structural exclusion and/or are underrepresented...”.¹⁷ Developed through an inclusive consultation process with more than 100 diverse women and persons with disabilities worldwide, 24 governments, feminist organizations and UN agencies, the Protocol showcases how its development and content inherently bears an intersectional lens.

Furthermore, Commitment Makers are implementing the “feminist leadership” principle by collaborating with and supporting feminist activists, organizations and movements. The “Adolescent Empowerment” (Breakthrough),¹⁸ “Maha Abu Dayya Fellowship” (WCLAC),¹⁹ “Women Builders of Peace Territories” (Tejiendo Pensamiento),²⁰ and “African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy” (FEMNET)²¹ programmes offer examples of how organizations are putting this principle into practice. These programmes – which operate in challenging contexts in Africa, Colombia, India and Palestine – have strengthened the agency and different capacities of hundreds of young women in the last few years.²² In the case of “Adolescent Empowerment”, Breakthrough developed school-based training²³ and peer programmes that encourage girls, boys and adolescents to question harmful social and gender norms, participate in intergenerational dialogues, build self-worth and deconstruct myths around menstruation. Moreover, the “Maha Abu Dayya Fellowship” supports advocacy for women’s human rights and leadership by offering them legal knowledge and skills. “Women Builders of Peace Territories” is a programme that helps women identify situations of gender-based violence and identify the route to access justice. Finally, the “African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy” teaches activists,

“We have increased knowledge on climate change and gender issues at the territorial level, providing women with the necessary tools to influence decision-making spaces effectively ... This involves leadership training.”
—Alejandra Nohora Quiguntar, Leader of the Feminist Action Coalition for Climate Justice, UN Women and Tejiendo Pensamiento

“Sometimes you do things without naming them. The value of naming things as ‘principles’ and being more explicit about them is that you can then convey these ideas to others and assess them more precisely.”
— Céline Bonnaire, Executive Director of the Kering Foundation



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

women’s organizations and other stakeholders about the impact of macroeconomic policies on women’s lives in Africa and strategies to influence them.

Finally, Commitment Makers practice the principle of “transformation” by implementing activities that challenge power relations and structures. Pursuing gender justice necessarily requires confronting different types of violence and systems of oppression. One of the ways that Commitment Makers put this principle into practice is through “feminist funding”. For example, the Global Fund for Women and GNWP have developed new models of funding feminist activists, organizations and movements. They are gradually moving away from practices that perpetuate asymmetrical relationships between grantees and grant-makers, and now provide sustainable and flexible funding, which means that grantees can decide where to allocate their funds. They have found ways for grantees to remain accountable while requiring fewer administrative burdens. Moreover, they focus on funding activists and grass-roots organizations that perform their advocacy and peacebuilding work in communities, as actively recognize them as experts. In the case of GNWP, it prioritizes rapid funding that is used towards the protection of women and youth peacebuilders, human rights defenders, and LGBTQI+ persons at risk due to their work or identity. Other Commitment Makers challenging traditional grant-

making by implementing feminist funding are the Ford Foundation and the Gucci Mother2Mothers (m2m) project.²⁴

“Transformation” is also practiced by Commitment Makers who are centering voices of historically marginalized groups and foster dialogue by creating leadership positions and empowering youth to co-create decision-making spaces. For instance, Generation Equality has created leadership positions for youth-led organizations in all Action Coalitions and the Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Group (MSLG). Moreover, Commitment Makers are implementing projects focused on the youth and strengthening their capabilities.

Even when enthusiasm for the three principles predates Generation Equality, Commitment Makers recognize that institutionalizing and naming them is, in itself, important, as is reaching a collective consensus about these shared aspirations. Besides providing formality and institutionalizing a common purpose, the principles generate cohesion and vitality among Commitment Makers. Generation Equality’s establishment of the principles has contributed by: 1) encouraging Commitment Makers to be more intentional/ purposeful in their work; 2) fostering a cooperative environment among Commitment Makers; and 3) providing Commitment Makers with the opportunity to strengthen their work.

13 Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.
14 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex and other gender identities and sexualities.
15 The Inclusive Generation Equality Collective. 2022. *Feminist Accessibility Protocol*.
16 Some of the measures proposed by the Protocol are: 1) ensure the participation and leadership positions of feminists with disabilities, 2) maintain a disability focal point that represents and works closely with other persons with disabilities, 3) ensure accessibility and accommodation measures for all events, 4) plan events ahead of time, and 5) consult accessibility and accommodation requirements with all guests.
17 The Inclusive Generation Equality Collective. 2022. *Feminist Accessibility Protocol*. p. 4.
18 Breakthrough. Undated. “Adolescent Empowerment”. <https://inbreakthrough.org/focus-area/adolescent-empowerment/>
19 WCLAC. 2023. “WCLAC Launches Maha Abu Dayya Fellowship”. https://www.wclac.org/News/413/WCLAC_Launches_Maha_Abu_Dayya_Fellowship
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22 For more information, see *Youth Case Study*.
23 Also called gender equity curriculum.

24 For more information see: Ladysmith. 2023. *Financial Commitments Case Study*.

Challenges highlighted by Commitment Makers

Commitment Makers have experienced several challenges in implementing their commitments during the first half of Generation Equality. Some of the challenges mentioned by the interviewees consulted that stand out are the following:

- **Intentional measurement and common understanding of Generation Equality's principles:** Commitment Makers consulted said that they do not measure the implementation of the three principles of "intersectionality", "feminist leadership", and "transformation" in a systematic way, but that an assessment of their implementation comes out as part of their institutional monitoring and evaluation practices. They expressed that measuring aspects/characteristics with a qualitative nature is still challenging. Commitment Makers say that measurement of these principles should start by ensuring a common understanding, taking the time to exchange learnings and reflections about their practice within and across Action Coalitions and the Compact. More importantly, interviewees stressed that measurement should be driven by the ultimate goal of transformation.
- **Centralization of Generation Equality processes:** Commitment Makers talk about a lack of awareness and understanding of Generation Equality at national and local levels. Some govern-

ment institutions and other relevant national actors whose engagement would highly benefit from the completion of Generation Equality commitments do not know the initiative or ways to join and participate. Moreover, Commitment Makers notice a mismatch between the commitments made in the international arena and their implementation at local and national levels. This sometimes requires extra effort by Commitment Makers since they have to build their local alliances with little or no support.

- **Separation between Action Coalition and the Compact:** The separation of the Compact from the six Action Coalitions has narrowed the possibilities of areas of collaboration between all actors. Compact signatories, particularly civil society, have been calling for collaboration since the launch of Generation Equality. The Commitment Makers consulted said that creating spaces and platforms that bring together the Compact and the Action Coalitions, bridging the silos that exist, would be an advantage to all, allowing them to sum efforts, experiences and resources. During the Generation Equality Midpoint Moment in September 2023, Compact Board Co-chair Mavic Cabrera Balleza called on Compact signatories and Action Coalition Commitment Makers to work together to optimize their collaborative advantage while celebrating their diversity.



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further the application of Generation Equality principles, recommendations for stakeholders include:

1

Create opportunities for Generation Equality stakeholders to discuss the core principles in a way that motivates new commitments and creates momentum for the remaining implementation period. For example, during strategic planning, Commitment Makers and Compact signatories could share their understanding of the Generation Equality core principles, reflect on issue-specific or regional experiences, and suggest opportunities to shape activities based on the principles, going forward.

2

Build awareness of how Generation Equality stakeholders have reflected the principle of transformation in implementing their commitments. For example, publicizing case studies could help to strengthen the sense of shared purpose that Commitment Makers and Compact signatories derive from discussing these principles. Further promote knowledge- and experience-sharing activities on how to work under these principles.

3

Develop a framework that enables more objective measurement of the principles to assess progress and impact by 2026, compared to the current subjective measurement of perception. This should be led by Generation Equality stakeholders and grounded in feminist principles and lived experiences.

4

Exercise greater attentiveness to stakeholder experiences that are being impacted by Generation Equality in addition to looking at progress through the lens of Commitment Makers. This includes horizontal collaboration, solidarity and flexibility, when needed.

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 Commitments Reporting 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.

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