



SYNTHESIS REPORT

Generation Equality's multi-stakeholder
partnership approach



UN WOMEN

UN Women exists to advance women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. We keep the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

GENERATION EQUALITY

Generation Equality is a multi-stakeholder initiative convened by UN Women in partnership with the UN system, 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 Declaration and 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.

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UN Women's UN System Coordination Division, Officer in Charge: Alice Shackelford

Report lead: Svenja Siemonsen

Report authors: Ladysmith

Production, communication and outreach: Svenja Siemonsen

Reviewers (in alphabetical order): Isatou Badjie, Lopa Banerjee, Marie Berg, Bindu Bhandari, Laura Brady, Nazneen Damji, Katrin Fischer, Laura Gagliardone, Evelyn Selle Letiyo, Helene Molinier, Roya Murphy, Javier Piriz, Papa Seck, Raymond Shama, Jeevika Shiv (all UN Women).

Contributors: Generation Equality partners that participated in interviews, focus group discussions and peer-reviewed this report.

Copyeditor: Jen Ross

Designer: Blossom

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



At a time of escalating backlash against gender equality, shrinking civic space, declining resources and growing strain on multilateral cooperation, understanding how diverse actors can work together to advance and defend women's rights has become increasingly urgent. This report examines Generation Equality as a feminist multi-stakeholder partnership and explores what five years of implementation reveal about the conditions that enable collective action for gender equality. It examines how governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms and ways of working shaped participation, influence and collaboration across governments, feminist and civil society organizations, youth-led movements, philanthropy, the private sector and the United Nations system.

Drawing on document review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions, the report argues that Generation Equality's most significant contribution extends beyond commitments, investments or individual policy outcomes. Its distinctive value lies in creating structures through which diverse stakeholders could participate in decision-making, build trust, develop shared priorities and act collectively over time. The findings suggest that transformative change depends not only on what partnerships achieve, but on whether they create meaningful pathways for influence, sustain collaboration and enable coordinated action in increasingly challenging political environments.

The evidence shows that Generation Equality's feminist governance approach enabled diverse stakeholders to move beyond participation towards influence, collective action and agenda-setting. Through shared leadership, accountability mechanisms and coalition-based collaboration, the partnership expanded opportunities for traditionally underrepresented actors to shape priorities, coordinate advocacy and engage in policy and normative processes. In doing

so, it helped connect gender equality actors across sectors and constituencies, while creating channels through which shared priorities could be advanced within broader multilateral, political and policy debates, including emerging discussions on technology governance, economic policy and multilateral reform. At the same time, the experience demonstrates that participation, trust and collective action depend on sustained investment in the institutional, relational and financial infrastructure that makes collaboration possible.

A central lesson emerging from the evidence is that feminist influence is most resilient when it is embedded in relationships, shared agendas and collective organizing. In a context of growing backlash and constrained resources, Generation Equality demonstrates how multi-stakeholder partnerships can help sustain voice, participation and collective action while keeping gender equality visible within wider global debates. The report concludes that strengthening inclusive governance, shared leadership and the infrastructure of collaboration will be essential to advancing gender equality beyond 2030.

INTRODUCTION



CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The landscape of gender equality in 2026 remains uneven, and in many ways teetering in the wrong direction, with progress slowing and setbacks mounting amid an increasingly volatile global environment. While some gains have been made – such as increased school completion rates for girls and the repeal of discriminatory laws in some countries – deep-rooted inequalities persist across social, economic and political spheres at the same time as decades of progress are being rolled back.

Women continue to earn less, own less and lead less, and unpaid care work keeps millions out of the labour force.¹ Global instability, conflict and climate shocks and environmental degradation are compounding these challenges, while gender-based violence remains high and backlash against women's sexual and reproductive rights is reversing hard-won progress.² These trends reflect deeply embedded structural inequalities, including unequal power relations, discriminatory norms, and exclusionary economic and political systems.

Rising conflict and war and the weakening of multilateral systems are also deeply reshaping the landscape in which gender advocates operate. In 2025 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development documented a 23 per cent decline in official development assistance, compared with 2024.³

At the same time, what was once considered a near-universal commitment to gender equality is increasingly being contested. Anti-rights movements are advancing coordinated efforts to roll back protections

for women and girls, while civic space is shrinking. Feminist organizations and women human rights defenders face growing risks, including harassment, legal persecution and violence. Declining and unpredictable funding further constrains the ability of grass-roots, youth-led and women's rights organizations to sustain their work.⁴

These challenges come at a time when the multilateral system itself is under strain. Yet they also underscore the importance of renewed collective action. As progress on gender equality becomes more difficult to sustain, the ability of diverse actors to work together across sectors, constituencies and levels of governance becomes increasingly important. Gender equality remains both a stand-alone goal and a prerequisite for achieving the wider 2030 Agenda. Strengthening inclusive partnerships, sustaining collaboration and mobilizing gender-responsive investments are therefore essential to advancing human rights, democratic participation and more resilient and inclusive societies.⁵

REPORT PURPOSE

Against this backdrop, this report examines Generation Equality as one of the most ambitious multi-stakeholder initiatives established to accelerate progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Deeply rooted in the multilateral tradition established by the UN Charter and reinforced across internationally agreed frameworks, Generation Equality offers a strategic, action-oriented approach to drive results and scale impact. Launched in 2021 by UN Women, together with governments, civil society, youth, philanthropy, the private sector and the wider United Nations system, Generation Equality was designed to mobilize collective commitments and action around six thematic Action Coalitions (ACs) and the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA Compact).

Five years after its launch, Generation Equality has generated a growing body of evidence on the opportunities and challenges of advancing gender equality through a multi-stakeholder approach. Annual accountability reporting has documented commitments, investments and results across the ACs and the WPS-HA Compact. Less attention, however, has been given to the partnership model itself: how diverse stakehol-

ders worked together, how participation and leadership were organized, how accountability was practiced and how collaboration contributed to outcomes.

This report responds to that gap. Drawing on document review, interviews and focus group discussions, it examines Generation Equality not only as a global initiative for advancing gender equality, but also as an experience in feminist multi-stakeholder governance. It explores what Generation Equality reveals about the conditions, opportunities and constraints of bringing together governments, civil society, youth, philanthropy, the private sector and the United Nations system around shared gender equality priorities.

At a time when both gender equality and multilateral cooperation face growing pressures, the experience of Generation Equality offers insights that extend beyond the initiative itself. The report therefore seeks to contribute to wider discussions on how inclusive and accountable forms of collaboration can support collective action, strengthen participation in decision-making and help sustain progress on gender equality in an increasingly complex global context.

EVIDENCE AND LIMITATIONS

This report draws on evidence generated across the Generation Equality partnership and was developed through a participatory synthesis process involving stakeholders from across the initiative. The methodology was explicitly designed to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of Generation Equality. The report adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining document review, key informant interviews (KIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The analysis builds on evidence generated through Generation Equali-

ty's Accountability Framework outlined in the Global Acceleration Plan and the Compact Framework.⁶ Primary data collection included 12 KIs and 12 FGDs involving representatives of governments, feminist and civil society organizations, youth-led organizations, philanthropic institutions, private sector actors, multilateral organizations and United Nations entities. Participants were selected to reflect diversity across regions, constituencies, Action Coalitions and levels of engagement within Generation Equality.

Data were analysed using a common thematic framework and findings were triangulated across sources to identify recurring themes, areas of convergence and divergence, and examples that illustrate broader patterns across the initiative. Findings were further refined through iterative consultation and feedback processes with Generation Equality stakeholders.

The report has some limitations. First, the findings are based primarily on qualitative evidence and therefore reflect stakeholder experiences, perceptions and interpretations. Second, while the sample was designed to capture a diversity of perspectives, it represents only a subset of the more than 1,000 organizations engaged in Generation Equality. Third, stakeholder experiences vary across ACs, regions, constituencies

and levels of engagement, and not all dimensions of the initiative could be examined in equal depth. Finally, as a synthesis report, the analysis does not seek to attribute specific policy, normative or institutional outcomes solely to Generation Equality. Instead, it focuses on identifying the contribution of Generation Equality's governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms and ways of working to observed changes and emerging lessons.

Despite these limitations, the report offers a unique perspective on how feminist multi-stakeholder governance has been experienced and practiced across five years of Generation Equality and draws valuable lessons for similar initiatives.



GENERATION EQUALITY



Generation Equality is a flagship multi-stakeholder partnership for gender equality, launched in Mexico and France in 2021 as a time-bound, global, action-oriented initiative to accelerate progress on the rights and empowerment of all women and girls.⁷ Convened by UN Women and anchored in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁸ it brings together governments, civil society and feminist organizations, youth-led movements, philanthropy, the private sector, academia and the United Nations system to drive collective action, spearhead global discourse, mobilize investment and deliver concrete results.⁹

Generation Equality was created in response to a growing recognition that persistent gender inequalities cannot be addressed by individual actors working in isolation. Building on extensive consultations and co-creation processes,¹⁰ it sought to create a more inclusive and action-oriented model for advancing gender equality – one that combines political leadership, diverse stakeholder participation, accountability and implementation. Particular emphasis was placed on bringing together actors across sectors, constituencies and generations, recognizing the importance of

intergenerational leadership in shaping priorities, decision-making and accountability.

Over its first five years, Generation Equality has evolved from a forum-based mobilization effort into a sustained partnership platform. In addition to mobilizing more than 2,500 commitments and USD 53 billion in investments, it has created spaces for collaboration, agenda-setting and collective engagement across global, regional and national levels, contributing to critical advances in many areas.¹¹

ARCHITECTURE

Generation Equality operates through six Action Coalitions and the WPS-HA Compact. Established through an open, inclusive and participatory application process,¹² each AC serves as a platform for advancing commitments, advocacy, accountability and collective action,¹³ covering Gender-Based Violence (GBV); Economic Justice and Rights (EJR); Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR);

Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ); Technology and Innovation (T&I) for Gender Equality; and Feminist Movements and Leadership (FML).¹⁴

Each Action Coalition is guided by a Blueprint for Action,¹⁵ while Compact signatories align around a shared Compact Framework.¹⁶

Together, these frameworks establish common priorities, accountability expectations and areas for collective action.

While sharing a common accountability framework and commitment to multi-stakeholder collaboration, the ACs and the WPS-HA Compact operate through distinct modalities. The Action Coalitions primarily serve as thematic platforms that bring together diverse stakeholders around shared agendas and collective action. The WPS-HA Compact is a politically anchored framework that mobilizes Member States, civil society, the United Nations system and other partners around a common set of actions to accelerate implementation and accountability on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. Together, these complementary approaches enable Generation Equality to advance

change through both thematic collaboration and political mobilization.

The architecture also created opportunities for stronger coordination across UN entities, governments, civil society and other stakeholders around shared gender equality priorities.

More than a commitment-making platform, Generation Equality functions as an ecosystem that connects stakeholders, facilitates collaboration across sectors and constituencies, and links global policy discussions with implementation and advocacy efforts. This architecture positions Generation Equality, its ACs and Compact, as catalysts for accelerating implementation, disrupting structural barriers and driving systemic change across the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A distinctive feature of Generation Equality is its emphasis on shared leadership and multi-stakeholder governance. Its governance arrangements were informed by feminist principles, including participation, shared leadership, accountability, intersectionality and intergenerational engagement. In practice, this meant that governments, civil society and feminist organizations, youth-led organizations, philanthropy, private sector actors and multilateral institutions participated in leadership, decision-making and accountability processes through formal governance structures and coalition-level mechanisms.

Following the Paris Forum in 2021, Generation Equality entered a new phase focused on sustained partnership-building and implementation. The experience demonstrated that collaboration could not be sustained through commitments alone. Regular coalition meetings, working groups, accountability processes and ongoing coordination became essential for aligning

priorities, navigating differences and maintaining momentum across a diverse partnership ecosystem. Over time, these repeated interactions helped build relationships, trust and shared ownership among partners.

Accountability is a core pillar of the initiative. Through its Accountability Framework and annual reporting processes, Generation Equality tracks progress on commitments while also generating learning on the ways stakeholders work together.¹⁸ This emphasis on both results and process reflects the initiative's understanding that transformative change depends not only on what is achieved, but also on how collaboration, participation and accountability are practised.

The following chapters examine what has emerged from this experience and what five years of Generation Equality reveal about feminist multi-stakeholder governance in practice.

FINDINGS



Finding 1

FEMINIST GOVERNANCE EXPANDED INFLUENCE BY CREATING PATHWAYS INTO AGENDA-SETTING, LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A defining success factor of Generation Equality's multi-stakeholder partnership model is that inclusiveness and participation are built into its design, rather than treated as an add-on. Through co-leadership arrangements, constituency-based governance mechanisms and participatory processes, stakeholders that have traditionally had limited access to global policy spaces gained opportunities to shape priorities, contribute to decision-making and hold partners accountable.¹⁹ This design choice matters, because it enables power-sharing, substantive influence and collective ownership – conditions that increase the likelihood that commitments translate into coordinated action and lasting change.²⁰

At the same time, the experience of Generation Equality demonstrates that broadening participation is not the same as redistributing power. While new actors gained access to global policy spaces, participation was at times shaped by broader inequalities in resources, institutional authority and capacity to engage consistently over time.

Expanding participation through intergenerational leadership

Youth leadership and intergenerational engagement within Generation Equality is recurrently highlighted as a key vehicle and outcome for the success of the initiative. Youth actors contributed not only as participants, but as agenda-shapers, accountability actors and co-creators of priorities and processes. This represented a deliberate effort to move beyond consultation towards more meaningful forms of participation and leadership.

The experience also demonstrated that participation itself could be contested and negotiated. Processes such as the Young Feminist Manifesto emerged from efforts by young feminists to articulate principles of co-leadership, accountability and meaningful participation, challenging prevailing interpretations of youth engagement and feminist leadership. Rather than illustrating a fully realized model from the outset, these debates highlighted how governance arrangements evolved through dialogue, critique and adaptation. In this sense, participation was not simply expanded; it was actively reshaped by those seeking greater influence within the initiative.

More broadly, Generation Equality created multiple pathways for youth engagement through leadership structures, accountability processes and mechanisms designed to promote intergenerational collaboration. The evidence also suggests that intergenerational leadership can generate influence beyond the partnership itself. Through sustained engagement in governance, accountability and advocacy processes, young feminists strengthened their capacity to navigate and contribute to multilateral policy spaces. This was reflected in the process leading to the Pact for the Future, where Generation Equality youth actors engaged in advocacy and consultations that helped inform the development of the Declaration on Future Generations. These experiences reinforced the importance of treating young people not only as beneficiaries or participants, but also as leaders and experts capable of shaping agendas and influencing decision-making processes.

Making participation more inclusive

Generation Equality's commitment to inclusiveness extended beyond representation to addressing barriers that prevent many constituencies from participating meaningfully in global policy spaces. The FML Action Coalition, for example, drew attention to the importance of disability inclusion through the development of the Feminist Accessibility Protocol. The Protocol is a ground-breaking set of commitments designed to ensure the inclusion of feminists with disabilities in gender equality spaces and processes.

Its significance extends beyond accessibility measures themselves. The experience highlighted a broader lesson emerging from Generation Equality: participation is shaped not only by who is invited into a space, but also by how that space is designed. Creating genuinely inclusive processes requires deliberate attention to accessibility, resources and the conditions that enable diverse stakeholders to engage on equal terms.

From participation to influence

The effects of inclusive participation were visible in the substantive influence that stakeholders exerted on global policy and normative agendas.²¹ The ACs and Compact served as deliberately inclusive “parliaments of stakeholders,”²² through which partners co-developed advocacy positions, drafted shared messages, issued joint statements, co-authored publications and

engaged in collective policy processes. These roles moved beyond consultation and created opportunities for stakeholders to exercise influence over agendas, advocacy positions and accountability processes

The evidence suggests that influence was strongest where stakeholders gained authority over agenda-setting, co-leadership or accountability functions. Contributions to processes such as CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40 illustrate how Generation Equality created pathways through which diverse constituencies could shape normative discussions and advance priorities grounded in their expertise and experience (see Box 1). The significance of these contributions, therefore, lies not only in the outcomes themselves, but in the pathways they created for influence.

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that Generation Equality provided opportunities to engage with policy processes and decision-making spaces that had previously been difficult to access. Generation Equality created opportunities for stakeholders to participate in agenda-setting, contribute to collective advocacy positions, engage directly in normative and policy processes, assume co-leadership functions and shape accountability discussions. Through these mechanisms, organizations that had long been working on gender equality issues found new avenues to shape global conversations and advance priorities grounded in their lived experience and expertise.

Box 1

INFLUENCING GLOBAL NORMS: CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATION NO. 40

Through its multi-stakeholder governance model, FML leaders, co-chairs and coalition members jointly developed a written submission linking women's representation to strong feminist movements, gender justice and intersectional leadership. The process marked the first common position issued by the coalition and engaged diverse stakeholders, including Indigenous women and women with disabilities. Subsequently, coalition

members, such as the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), used the recommendation as an advocacy tool to advance gender parity and inclusive representation in decision-making.²³ Follow-up webinars, statements and engagement with CEDAW experts helped translate the recommendation into advocacy opportunities for governments, parliamentarians, youth leaders and feminist movements.

Broadening networks and unlocking resource opportunities

Generation Equality demonstrates that influence depends not only on access to decision-making spaces, but also on access to the resources, relationships and institutional opportunities that enable organizations to sustain engagement over time. Participation became more consequential when organizations were able to convert new connections, visibility and resourcing into longer-term engagement, leadership roles and policy influence. In this sense, resources

functioned not only as support for participation, but also as enablers of influence.

One of the strongest and most consistent findings emerging from the evidence is that Generation Equality created unprecedented access to networks and funding opportunities. Many youth-led, grass-roots and community-based organizations reported gaining access to governments, UN entities, philanthropic partners, multilateral institutions and private-sector actors that would not otherwise have been available to them. This access was frequently described as a “real seat



Box 2**FROM PARTICIPATION
TO RESOURCES: WYDE**

WYDE, a women's leadership initiative funded by the European Union, prioritized funding to civil society organizations that were Commitment makers to the Generation Equality FML AC. In total, 16 civil society organizations were funded in 2025 and 2026 for a total of over USD 2 million under WYDE. These programmes work to advance women's leadership and representation while transforming social norms and strengthening the women's movement.

at the table" within global policy discussions,²⁴ which opened pathways to new partnerships, strengthened collaboration across constituencies and enabled underrepresented actors to benefit from funding mechanisms that were previously out of reach. To sustain this seat at the table, youth-led organizations that were underresourced have gained visibility and funding to fulfil their role as coalition leaders. Such was the case for one Ugandan youth-led organization that secured support from the French Government through connections made in the ACs.²⁵

This access was not merely symbolic. It generated opportunities for partnership-building, collaboration, visibility and resourcing. Evidence suggests that by bringing organizations into sustained engagement with governments, philanthropic institutions, donors and other resource holders, Generation Equality increased awareness of the work being undertaken by participating organizations and created opportunities for new partnerships and collaboration. Funding opportunities included small-grant schemes, sub-granting arrangements and direct financial support to fulfil the role of an AC Leader or to participate in global processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The model also facilitated connections that enabled organizations to secure support through new partnerships with governments and other funders.

Initiatives such as WYDE (Women and Youth Democratic Engagement) and the ACT (Advocacy, Coalition-Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence against Women) programme further illustrate how participation catalysed access to resources, leadership opportunities and institutional support (see Box 2 below). Moreover, the FACJ AC supported the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation's Fund for Climate to identify, screen and distribute funds to grass-roots organizations with limited budgets.²⁶

The limits of participation

Despite these achievements, the analysis reveals that participation remained uneven. Meaningful engagement required time, funding, coordination capacity and accessible modalities, creating significant barriers for some grass-roots organizations, youth-led groups and organizations representing persons with disabilities. Participation therefore continued to reflect underlying disparities in resources and capacity.

Stakeholders also questioned whether expanded participation always translated into equal influence. While Generation Equality created new opportunities for engagement and agenda-setting, differences in institutional authority, political leverage and access to resources continued to shape whose voices carried weight in practice. Moreover, broader intergovernmental processes often retained traditional power hierarchies, limiting the extent to which influence gained within Generation Equality carried over into other decision-making spaces.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that participation alone was insufficient to shift influence. Influence expanded where stakeholders gained roles in leadership, agenda-setting and accountability and where they could access the resources necessary to sustain engagement over time. The strongest examples emerged when stakeholders were able to shape priorities, contribute to governance arrangements and influence how participation itself was organized. At the same time, persistent disparities in resources, institutional authority and political leverage limited the extent to which influence gains translated into broader shifts in power.

Finding 2

SHARED LEADERSHIP AND TRUST ENABLED COLLECTIVE ACTION ACROSS DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

Generation Equality enabled collective action by creating structures through which stakeholders could collaborate repeatedly and iteratively over time. Through shared leadership arrangements, coalition governance mechanisms, accountability processes and regular engagement, stakeholders developed relationships that reduced the costs of coordination and made it easier to align around common objectives.²⁷ Collective action emerged not simply because stakeholders shared commitments to gender equality, but because repeated interaction reduced transaction costs and created trust, communication channels and practical ways of working together.

As Generation Equality evolved from a Forum-based mobilization effort into a sustained partnership platform, these relationships became a form of partnership infrastructure. Once established, stakeholders could draw on trusted relationships, existing networks and shared working methods to coordinate advocacy, respond to emerging challenges and advance common priorities more quickly and effectively than would otherwise have been possible.

Building solidarity in a “coalition of the willing”²⁸

A central contribution of Generation Equality was its ability to bring together actors around a shared ambition for gender equality. Over time, stakeholders increasingly came to see themselves as part of a broader effort to advance common goals rather than solely as representatives of their own organizations or thematic priorities. In this spirit, the ACs and Compact remained inclusive, ensuring that newer, less-resourced and less-connected actors could participate meaningfully.

This solidarity functioned as a practical enabler of collective action: it allowed partners to coordinate

across constituencies, respond quickly to threats to gender equality, and remain resilient in sustaining momentum amid backlash and competing global crises. This solidarity was strengthened by recognition of the complementary roles among stakeholders contributing distinct forms of expertise, influence, legitimacy and access.

The experience also demonstrated that solidarity does not require uniformity. Stakeholders often entered the ACs and Compact with different priorities, institutional cultures and approaches. Rather than eliminating these differences, Generation Equality created spaces within which they could be navigated in pursuit of shared objectives. This helped foster a coalition that was willing to collaborate despite differences and to work collectively on issues that no single actor could advance alone.

Trust through collaboration and repeated engagement

Trust emerged as the mechanism that enabled collective action across a highly diverse partnership. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that collaboration became easier over time because they had developed confidence in one another's priorities, commitments and ways of working. Rather than requiring new relationships to be built for every issue, partners could rely on existing networks and established practices to coordinate action, navigate disagreement and pursue shared objectives. Trust therefore reduced the transaction costs of collaboration and increased the partnership's capacity to act collectively (see example of The Gambia in box 3 above).

The intentional facilitation practices across the ACs and Compact, embedded in Generation Equality's governance structures – of co-creation, respectful

Box 3**CROSS-COALITION SOLIDARITY DRIVING COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE GAMBIA**

The coalition-of-the-willing dynamic is most visible when solidarity translated into rapid collective response. In 2024, the SRHR, FML and GBV ACs mobilized rapidly their constituencies to push back on an attempted reversal of the female genital mutilation ban in The Gambia. An example how trust-based collaboration and established networks enabled coordinated action. Generation Equality's value lay in coordinating across a set of trusted multi-stakeholder space, enabling and amplifying locally led advocacy and actors. Civil society organizations, governments, donors and UN entities coordinated advocacy, shared information and aligned messaging to support local efforts defending the legislation. Stakeholders emphasized that the response was possible because relationships, trust and communication channels had already been established throu-

gh Generation Equality. Different actors played complementary roles, with local organizations providing context and legitimacy, while governments, donors and UN agencies brought political leverage and convening power.²⁹

The response demonstrates how collective action was built before the crisis occurred. Established relationships, communication channels and shared ways of working enabled stakeholders to coordinate rapidly when a common challenge emerged.⁵⁷ The significance of the example lies not only in the outcome, but in demonstrating how sustained engagement created capacity for collective action beyond individual organizations or coalitions.³⁰

dialogue and working methods – were explicitly designed to recognize and mitigate power asymmetries, deepen relationships and develop common understandings.³¹ Additionally, accountability processes, in particular, served not only to track commitments but also to create moments for collective reflection, learning and alignment across stakeholders, reinforcing a sense of shared ownership over both processes and results. These interactions enabled actors to navigate differences, build confidence in one another's contributions and build trust-based partnerships as the foundations for collective action.³²

Evidence suggests that trust functioned as political infrastructure. It enabled stakeholders to coordinate advocacy, align messages, share information and mobilize collectively across institutional mandates and constituencies. In this sense, trust was not simply a by-product of collaboration; it increased the partnership's ability to act.^{33,34}

From solidarity and trust to collective action

The contribution of Generation Equality was not that it eliminated differences among stakeholders. Governments, civil society organizations, youth-led groups, philanthropic actors and UN entities continued to hold different interests, resources and forms of authority.³⁵ What changed was their ability to act together despite those differences. Collective action therefore emerged from coordination across diversity rather than consensus or uniformity.

The relationships and trust developed through Generation Equality enabled stakeholders to move beyond dialogue towards coordinated action.³⁶ Across the initiative, established partnerships and communication channels facilitated joint advocacy, the development of common positions, shared statements and coordinated engagement in multilateral and national processes.

Collective action took multiple forms, including the development of common positions, coordinated advocacy, shared statements and engagement in multilateral and national processes.³⁷ Cross-coalition collaboration around International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190,³⁸ for example, demonstrated how stakeholders working across EJR, GBV and other thematic areas aligned advocacy efforts around a shared objective.³⁹ Such examples illustrate how relationships developed through Generation Equality enabled actors to move beyond individual mandates and collaborate on issues spanning multiple coalitions and policy domains.

Collective action also benefited from the ability of stakeholders to contribute in complementary ways. Local organizations and feminist movements brought context, lived experience and community legitimacy; governments and multilateral actors contributed political influence and convening power; while philanthropic and other partners helped unlock resources and strategic opportunities. For example, the IPU – as a leader for the FML AC – strategically engaged young parlia-



mentarians on gender equality.⁴⁰ They have hosted sessions during their assemblies where leaders from the coalition met and worked with young parliamentarians. Generation Equality provided a framework through which these different contributions could be aligned in support of shared objectives.

Shared leadership as infrastructure for collective action

Shared leadership arrangements played an important role in enabling collaboration across diverse stakeholders. By distributing leadership responsibilities across governments, civil society and other actors, the ACs and Compact sought to move beyond stakeholder consultations towards active co-creation and collective ownership, creating pathways for shared decision-making and ownership of priorities, implementation and accountability.⁴¹

One of the defining features of Generation Equality is the positioning of feminist movements, youth-led organizations and civil society actors as co-leaders, agenda-setters and accountability actors. In a partnership of Generation Equality's scale and diversity, this shared leadership model provided an important mechanism for sustaining collaboration across different constituencies.⁴² While consensus was not always straightforward, the process of jointly shaping agendas and advancing common priorities strengthened relationships and reinforced commitments to collective action. Stakeholders were not only implementing activities; they were helping shape agendas and decisions. This in turn, increased incentives for continued engagement and strengthened commitment to collective outcomes, even when priorities or institutional interests did not fully align.

Strengthening resilience through coalition

Beyond enabling coordinated action, solidarity also operated as a resilience mechanism – especially relevant in a context of shrinking civic space, political backlash and resource constraints. Relationships developed through Generation Equality created channels through which stakeholders could share information, amplify advocacy efforts and mobilize support

Box 4**HOLDING THE LINE: DEFENDING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS IN CONTESTED SPACES**

The same trust-based relationships that enabled rapid mobilization in The Gambia also underpinned partners' ability to act collectively in global negotiations. The practices that built confidence – consistent participation, honest dialogue and the creation of safe, equitable working spaces – gave CSOs, youth-led groups, governments and other actors the cohesion required to “hold the red lines”, even when pressure to dilute rights-based language was strong.

In this way, SRHR became a practical stress-test of solidarity: a space where partners relied on the trust and working methods developed across the ACs to coordinate messages, defend rights-based formulations and sustain unified positions despite different mandates, sensitivities and political risks. Coordinated messaging, joint advocacy and partners' insistence that SRHR remain visible in official documents demonstrate how solidarity translated directly into political leverage.⁴³

when needed.⁴⁴ One such channel were the FML and SRHR ACs. By creating spaces for shared analysis, cross-regional learning and collective advocacy on issues such as civic space, feminist funding and the protection of women human rights defenders, both ACs provided this resilience function.

The ACs and Compact, underpinned by trust, solidarity and respect, are perceived as a form of shelter by some stakeholders:⁴⁵ a space to remain engaged, coordinate with allies and sustain visibility for gender equality priorities even when governments were occupied by crises⁴⁶ or when operating conditions were constrained. They did more than congregate actors – they protected causes. By linking actors through formal and informal channels, Generation Equality created a network of mutual support and reliability. These dynamics became particularly important in contexts where progress on gender equality faced resistance or where stakeholders operated in increasingly constrained environments. The ability to draw upon established relationships and collective support helped sustain engagement and maintain momentum around shared priorities.

The limits of collective action

The evidence also highlights the investments required to sustain trust and collaboration over time. Building

and maintaining relationships across a diverse partnership ecosystem demanded significant time, coordination and resources. Turnover among participating organizations and changes in leadership sometimes disrupted continuity and required relationships to be rebuilt. These challenges were often most acute for organizations operating with limited staffing and funding.

The analysis further demonstrates that collaboration does not eliminate differences in power, influence or interests. While trust and shared leadership enabled collaboration, tensions occasionally emerged between actors with different priorities, capacities and incentives. Maintaining collective action therefore required continuous effort, accountability and a continued willingness to engage across differences.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that collective action was not a direct product of stakeholder diversity, shared commitments or participation alone. It emerged through repeated interaction, trust-building and governance arrangements that enabled stakeholders to coordinate across differences over time. The most significant contribution of Generation Equality was therefore not simply bringing actors together, but creating the relationships, incentives and mechanisms that allowed them to act together when opportunities or challenges emerged.

Finding 3

SHARED AGENDA-SETTING AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP SHAPED GLOBAL AGENDAS AND NORMS

Generation Equality's influence extended beyond the initiative itself. By bringing together diverse stakeholders around shared priorities, the ACs and Compact created pathways through which gender equality concerns could enter policy processes, institutional reforms and normative discussions beyond the partnership. Its contribution was therefore not limited to implementing commitments, but also included shaping how gender equality priorities were carried into wider governance systems.⁴⁷

The evidence suggests that influence emerged not primarily from individual organizations acting alone, but from the ability of stakeholders to develop shared agendas, coordinate advocacy and repeatedly advance common priorities across multiple policy arenas.⁴⁸ Through this process, Generation Equality helped connect gender equality actors to systems and institutions that traditionally operated outside dedicated gender equality spaces.

Defining shared priorities for collective action

A distinctive feature of Generation Equality was the development of shared priorities through the Action Coalition Blueprints⁴⁹ and the Compact Framework.⁵⁰ These processes enabled stakeholders from different constituencies to identify common concerns, articulate areas for collective action and align around shared agendas. Rather than advancing separate institutional priorities, stakeholders developed platforms through which common priorities could be promoted across different policy arenas and governance processes,⁵¹ for example, the EJR AC together with the Global Alliance for Care anchored global attention to care as a public good in the declaration of 29 October as the International Day for Care and Support.

The Action Coalitions also expanded the scope of issues addressed through gender equality action. Climate justice, technology and innovation, and feminist movements and leadership were framed not as stand-alone or technical sectors, but as core gender equality concerns with cross-cutting implications across the 2030 Agenda. By incorporating these issues within the architecture of Generation Equality, the Blueprints created shared agendas that connected gender equality to policy discussions extending beyond traditional gender equality forums.

This expanded the range of policy arenas in which gender equality actors could engage. Rather than treating climate governance, technology governance or macroeconomic policy as separate domains, Generation Equality positioned them as part of a broader gender equality agenda. In doing so, it created opportunities for feminist actors to influence discussions that had often evolved without sustained gender equality engagement.

Advancing priorities through political leadership

The evidence suggests that political leadership played an important role in translating shared priorities into broader influence. Generation Equality functioned as a transmission mechanism through which priorities developed within the ACs and Compact could be carried into emerging governance processes. Governments, working alongside feminist organizations, youth-led groups, UN entities and other stakeholders, carried priorities developed through the ACs and Compact into formal multilateral and intergovernmental processes, as seen during the CEDAW Generation Recommendation No. 40 deliberations (Box 1), and the WYDE programme (Box 2) mentioned above.⁵² This created pathways through which AC priorities could

inform negotiations, policy discussions and emerging normative frameworks.

As a result, the partnership enabled gender equality actors to move from reacting to external agendas towards helping shape them. For example, the T&I AC aligned around common priorities relating to digital inclusion, technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the gender dimensions of emerging technologies. Through sustained and coordinated engagement across digital governance discussions, including processes linked to the Global Digital Compact, these priorities were repeatedly advanced and reinforced in discussions shaping emerging global approaches to technology governance.⁵³ The significance of this experience lies not only in participation, but in the ability of diverse stakeholders to consistently advance shared priorities through a range of global policy processes.

Moreover, Generation Equality's influence extended beyond gender-specific forums into wider debates on economic governance. Rather than advocating for stand-alone gender commitments, stakeholders sought to integrate gender equality considerations into broader policy frameworks that shape resource allocation and development priorities. Priorities relating to care systems, women's economic rights and gender-transformative economies, for example, informed coalition engagement in financing for development discussions. Coordinated advocacy and political engagement led by the EJRA AC galvanized feminist solidarity and political leadership to centre gender-responsive macroeconomic policy recommendations in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) process and outcome.



Expanding influence across policy domains

The evidence further suggests that Generation Equality strengthened the ability of gender equality actors to engage policy domains that are often addressed through separate institutional and governance processes. By creating shared agendas around climate justice, technology and innovation, economic justice and other cross-cutting issues, the ACs established connections across policy communities that do not routinely interact.⁵⁴

By bringing together priorities from the EJR and GBV ACs, stakeholders connected labour rights, violence prevention and economic justice agendas in the cross-AC collaboration on ILO Convention No. 190.⁵⁵ This enabled coordinated engagement around a shared normative objective while reinforcing links across thematic areas within the broader gender equality agenda. Similarly, FML and SRHR ACs work on civic space, access to justice, women human rights defenders and

young feminist leadership helped connect movement concerns to wider normative and intergovernmental processes, including CSW69 and related advocacy.

Across these examples, the contribution of Generation Equality was less about direct authority over outcomes than about increasing the visibility, legitimacy and continuity of gender equality priorities across multiple policy processes. Influence occurred when shared agendas developed within the partnership were repeatedly advanced through institutions, negotiations and governance forums beyond its formal structures.

The limits of influence

The evidence also highlights the limits of influence. While Generation Equality contributed to shaping agendas, norms and institutional practices across multiple forums, influence did not automatically translate into the adoption of policies, institutional reforms or implementation outcomes. Final decisions remained subject to political negotiations, competing priorities and factors beyond the ACs and Compact's control.

Influence was also uneven across issues and contexts. Some processes provided greater opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement and agenda-setting than others, and the extent to which Generation Equality priorities were reflected in final outcomes varied considerably. Influence on global agendas and norms therefore should not be equated with authority over outcomes.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that Generation Equality contributed to change by connecting gender equality priorities to wider governance systems. Shared agendas, multi-stakeholder advocacy and political leadership enabled stakeholders to carry feminist priorities into institutions and policy processes operating beyond the partnership itself. The strongest examples of influence emerged not where Generation Equality acted alone, but where its priorities became embedded within broader agendas, governance arrangements and institutional practices. This suggests that the initiative's most significant contribution was not only advancing specific commitments but also expanding the pathways through which gender equality actors can shape wider systems of governance.

Box 5

INSTITUTIONALIZING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER HEARINGS IN CSW

The influence of Generation Equality extended beyond substantive agendas to the structures through which global gender equality discussions are conducted.⁵⁶ Stakeholders drew on experiences from the ACs and WPS-HA Compact to advocate for more systematic participation of civil society, youth and other constituencies within CSW. The adoption of the CSW revitalization resolution in 2025 institutionalized multi-stakeholder hearings as a regular feature of the Commission's work, embedding a practice that had been central to Generation Equality's approach and creating a permanent mechanism for constituency engagement within the principal global intergovernmental forum on gender equality.

SUSTAINING FEMINIST ORGANIZING, VOICE AND INFLUENCE DURING BACKLASH



The findings point to a reinforcing relationship between participation, collective action and influence. Opening decision-making spaces to a wider range of actors created new opportunities for agenda-setting and leadership. Trust, solidarity and shared leadership transformed participation into collective action. Shared priorities, developed through the Action Coalition Blueprints and the Compact Framework, created a basis for sustained engagement in broader policy and normative processes. Together, these dynamics enabled stakeholders not only to participate in discussions, but also to shape them.

A broader lesson emerging from the evidence is that feminist influence is most resilient when it is embedded in relationships, networks, shared agendas and in the infrastructure that sustains them. Generation Equality demonstrates how feminist multi-stakeholder governance can help sustain organizing, voice and influence across diverse constituencies while keeping gender equality visible and relevant within wider global debates. At the heart of this experience is the recognition that influence is not produced

through participation alone. It is built and maintained through continuous investment in the conditions that make collaboration possible. These conditions include resources for accessibility, translation, interpretation, travel, coordination, accountability and leadership by feminist, youth-led and grass-roots actors, as well as the often-invisible convening, facilitation and relationship-building functions required to maintain a diverse partnership. The experience suggests that feminist multi-stakeholder governance is therefore not only a question of sharing power, but also of sustaining the institutional, relational and financial foundations that enable participation, trust and collective action to endure.

As Generation Equality transitions beyond 2026, the central challenge is therefore not simply to preserve commitments or structures, but to sustain the conditions that enabled participation, collective action and influence in the first place. The recommendations that follow focus on how these conditions can be strengthened, resourced and institutionalized beyond the life of the initiative.



RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTITUTIONALIZE SHARED LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Embed co-leadership and shared decision-making in governance structures. Participation should be linked to agenda-setting, accountability and decision-making authority, not consultation alone.

Priority actions

- Establish co-leadership arrangements across stakeholder groups.
- Embed constituency participation in governance and agenda-setting processes.
- Link participation to accountability and decision-making roles.

INVEST IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Recognize convening, coordination and relationship-building as core functions of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Trust and collective action require sustained investment over time.

Priority actions

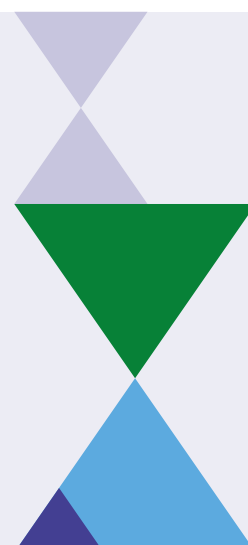
- Resource regular spaces for coordination and joint problem-solving.
- Fund facilitation, stewardship and partnership-building functions.
- Reduce barriers to sustained participation by underresourced stakeholders.

SUSTAIN COLLECTIVE AGENDA-SETTING AND PATHWAYS TO INFLUENCE

Create mechanisms through which stakeholders can jointly define priorities and advance them in policy and intergovernmental processes.

Priority actions

- Invest in processes that generate shared priorities and collective positions.
- Strengthen links between multi-stakeholder platforms and formal policy processes.
- Support coordinated engagement across policy domains and institutions.



ANNEX



LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Table 1. Focus group discussions

FGD ID	Type of organization	Stakeholder type	Date
FGD-01	Multilateral institutions	Policy experts	09/04/2025
FGD-02	Multilateral institutions	Programme leads	09/04/2025
FGD-03	Youth organizations	Youth representatives	29/04/2025
FGD-04	Multilateral institutions	Senior policy advisors	01/05/2025
FGD-05	Multilateral institutions	Technical experts	05/05/2025
FGD-06	Multilateral institutions	Technical experts	06/05/2025
FGD-07	Cross-sectoral	Thematic leads	06/05/2025
FGD-08	International organizations	Legislative advisors	07/05/2025
FGD-09	Intergovernmental organizations	Coalition members	07/05/2025
FGD-10	Multilateral institutions	Coordination specialists	13/05/2025
FGD-11	Cross-sectoral	Coalition members	14/05/2025
FGD-12	Governmental body	Thematic leads	16/05/2025

Table 2. Key informant interviews

KII ID	Type of organization	Stakeholder type	Date
KII-01	Independent expert	Gender & Climate Expert	14/04/2025
KII-02	Non-governmental organization	Peace & Gender Advocate	15/04/2025
KII-03	Civil society organization	Indigenous Rights Advocate	17/04/2025
KII-04	Multilateral institutions	Senior Gender Equality Official	21/04/2025
KII-05	Government	Senior Policy Officer	29/04/2025
KII-06	Government	Gender Equality Ambassador	30/04/2025
KII-07	Multilateral institutions	Senior Gender Policy Leader	02/05/2025
KII-8	Philanthropic sector	Gender Equality Advocate	09/05/2025
KII-9	Civil society organization	Chief Executive Officer	13/05/2025
KII-10	Multilateral institutions	Special Advisor	22/05/2025
KII-11	Multilateral institutions	Gender Advisor	02/06/2025
KII-12	Private sector	Global Gender Programme Lead	02/06/2025

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- 15 UN Women 2021a.
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- 17 Ibid.
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- 19 KII-02, FGD-03 (see Annex).
- 20 KII-07.
- 21 FGD-01; FGD-06.
- 22 KII-07.
- 23 FGD-08
- 24 FGD-06, FGD-11, KII-03, KII-07).
- 25 FGD-04.
- 26 UN Women 2024b.
- 27 FGD-08, KII-10, FGD-03; FGD-09.
- 28 KII-10, FGD-03; FGD-09.
- 29 FGD-12.
- 30 KII-02, FGD-06, FGD-10, FGD-11, KII-04, KII-09, KII-10.
- 31 FGD-01.
- 32 Across young feminist and intergenerational experiences, meaningful partnership was associated with early involvement in agenda-setting, co-owned decision-making, role clarity, feedback loops, compensation norms and transparent resource-sharing arrangements. These are practical ways through which feminist governance values are translated into day-to-day partnership practice.
- 33
- 34 FGD-05, FGD-11, KII-06.
- 35 FGD-03, FGD-04, KII-01, KII-02, KII-03, KII-04, KII-05, KII-07, KII-08, KII-11.
- 36 FGD-12.
- 37 KII-07.
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- 42 FGD-03, FGD-04, KII-01, KII-02, KII-03, KII-04, KII-05, KII-07, KII-08, KII-11.
- 43 KII-8, FGD-02, FGD-11, KII-11.
- 44 FGD-01, FGD-02, FGD-08, FGD-09, KII-10, FGD-12.
- 45 FGD-01; FGD-09.
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220 E 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

www.unwomen.org