TORCHLIGHT COLLECTIVE

#TORCHLIGHTLEARNING

TORCHLIGHT COLLECTIVE

THE TORCHLIGHT COLLECTIVE is a social enterprise that brings together leading consultants and professionals from around the world to strengthen meaningful adolescent and youth engagement in the global health and development agenda. We leverage our individual and collective strengths to deliver high-quality consulting services to governments, multilateral agencies, donors and civil society organizations.

June 2019

When we founded The Torchlight Collective, we wanted to bring together some of the best minds working at the intersection of sexual and reproductive health, human rights and youth movements. Over the past two years, we have benefited from the expertise of many brilliant people, including some of our best partners, and also learned together as a collective. Now, we're proud to introduce the first products in our #TorchlightLearning Series. This collection brings together insights from across our network, and we're excited to be leveraging so much expertise in one place.

Our hope is that these publications offer wisdom, fodder for discussion and practical advice to benefit anyone interested in supporting or learning about youth-led advocacy!

Those of you with money to give or grant:
you'll find out how youth leadership models are evolving, and also principles for supporting youth movements.

Those rebel rousers among us:
you'll find tips on improving your advocacy and building leadership skills; and a quick and dirty guide to the pros/cons of joining a youth-led coalition.

This inaugural series includes the following briefs:

STRONGER TOGETHER
Considerations when joining a youth-led coalition

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION
New and emerging leadership approaches

FUNDING YOUTH MOVEMENTS
Insights from youth movements and principles for donors

To comment and share your ideas, please visit our blog at www.torchlightcollective.org/learning and follow us on Facebook / Twitter / Instagram.

Please read, disseminate and discuss! As always, please reach out with feedback or ideas for future publications.

Thank you for joining the discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STRONGER TOGETHER

Considerations when joining
a youth-led coalition

Around the world, young people are leading sexual and reproductive health (SRH) movements that have the potential to create healthier futures for generations. In East Africa, for example, a wave of SRH advocacy is growing, with youth-led organizations in Kenya and Tanzania joining forces to implement SRH sensitization activities, hold their national and local governments to account and increase access to free and accessible family planning services. These youth-led coalitions are positioning themselves to change the family planning landscape in the region while setting an example for youth-led advocacy globally.

The Torchlight Collective has worked closely with the Kenya Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Network (KAYSRHR) to collect insights on their experiences with starting and growing a youth-led advocacy coalition. This brief offers guidance and support to other young advocates or organizations considering starting or joining a youth-led coalition, specifically focusing on:

- The benefits of starting or joining a youth-led coalition
- The difficulties in starting or joining a youth-led coalition
- The elements that contribute to an enabling environment for a youth-led coalition to thrive

WHY GET INVOLVED?

For young advocates in KAYSRHR, there was a clear value to joining forces with like-minded groups, particularly for youth-led organizations who already have a hard time accessing resources and policy spaces. When unpacking the reasons for starting or joining a youth-led coalition, young advocates shared three main benefits.

1. Joint fundraising opportunities:
"We felt we were better placed to fundraise as a coalition rather than as an individual organization by leveraging the strengths of different organizations."

With a strong coalition of organizations comes a built-in network of partnerships and allies that are automatically pooled from individual entities. This can be a fantastic opportunity for fundraising, particularly after the coalition has established a mission, vision and values. With a strong brand and strategic advocacy goals, fundraising for a coalition may yield more success than fundraising as a single entity.

2. Collective leverage:
"The vast wealth of experience and knowledge brought to the table by all the young advocates [is impressive]."

Young people are diverse – from their education to their professional experience to their community context – and they offer different insights and opinions. Young advocates in particular are not a homogeneous group and have an array of knowledge and perspectives that can enrich advocacy processes. A coalition gains strength when its intellectual resources are pooled as well as its financial ones.

3. Power in numbers:
"If we can develop a collective voice that is strong, with many diverse perspectives represented, we cannot be ignored by government."

When powerful voices unite with a common message and priorities, there is a stronger chance that young people can have an impact on policy. When a strong coalition of diverse and knowledgeable youth-led organizations come together to formulate a thoughtful advocacy strategy, it is in their government's best interest to listen, take note and make literal room at the table.

WHAT TO KNOW FIRST

For young advocates in KAYSRHR, there were also clear difficulties to starting a youth-led coalition. Although a diversity of voices can enrich an advocacy process, a coalition can also create competition, ideological divisions and even add layers of bureaucracy to the advocacy process. When unpacking the difficulties in starting or joining a youth-led coalition, young advocates shared three main issues.

1. Inadequate funding for advocacy activities:
"We hardly had enough money to organize meetings, especially for members coming from different parts of the country."

Youth-led advocacy coalitions often have significantly less funding than other more seasoned coalitions, leaving young advocates with few resources to operate, convene and coordinate. Key components of advocacy – like hosting strategic meetings, transportation to convenings with decision makers, internet and phone resources – are basic work needs that youth coalitions may be unable to cover from their own budgets or pockets. When a coalition lacks basic operating funds, their advocacy activities become untenable to implement, crippling their coalition and sometimes even halting activities altogether. It is also important to note that inadequate funding for advocacy and programmatic activities makes it impossible to compensate the leaders and coordinators of the coalition, and when young people are not compensated for their time it's difficult to retain

them, particularly when they have prior commitments like school, internships or paid positions.

2. Lack of buy-in or ownership from members:

"Ownership from all members, even from coalition leadership, can be difficult because no one wants to be a volunteer."

When there is little funding to compensate coalition members, particularly those serving in leadership roles, it is difficult to ensure that members take ownership for the coalition's success and fully step into a leadership role. When there is little formal investment from coalition members, or when members assume someone else is doing the work, progress stagnates. What makes the cultivation of ownership of the coalition's success even more difficult is when member's skills and interests are not identified and utilized in a way that is mutually beneficial. This makes it difficult to keep members engaged and excited about the work, making full participation in coalition activities more and more difficult.

3. Potential for competition among organizations:

"Fear of competition from other players in the coalition who feel like the network is going to compete with them for resources [is a major issue]."

Although communal fundraising is a benefit of participating in a youth-led advocacy coalition, coalitions in resource-starved environments may find themselves competing for resources and attention. At the core of a coalition is the idea that the success of the network is just as important as each of the members; but when the network gets more visibility than individual organizations, resentment may cripple the movement's momentum. Coalition members may also become competitive when various opportunities to lead, travel, or access decision making spaces are offered, making it difficult to put the needs of the coalition first. Often when a funding call is shared, it could be appropriate for both the coalition and individual organizations to apply. When there is a consistent trend of funding going to the coalition, leaders of organizations may resent the fact that their organizations are no longer receiving funding, but smaller portions of a shared fund.

HOW TO MAKE IT WORK

For young advocates in KAYSRHR, there are also clear investments that can curb some of the aforementioned difficulties, thus aiding in creating an enabling environment for youth-led coalitions to thrive. These include:

1. Adult partnerships:

"Our mentors helped us to get organized and to establish leadership structures, mission, vision and objectives of the coalition."

Having adult allies who not only believe in the coalition, but also in the value of youth-led advocacy in its own right, is essential as they can aid coalitions in accessing resources, policy spaces and other opportunities. In many ways, adults holding positions in NGOs (both national and international), foundations or the government can serve as gatekeepers to funding and opportunities for policy impact, therefore making their mentorship to the coalition extremely crucial. It is important to cultivate and leverage adults who believe in youth-led advocacy and are willing to share space.

2. Funding for advocacy activities:

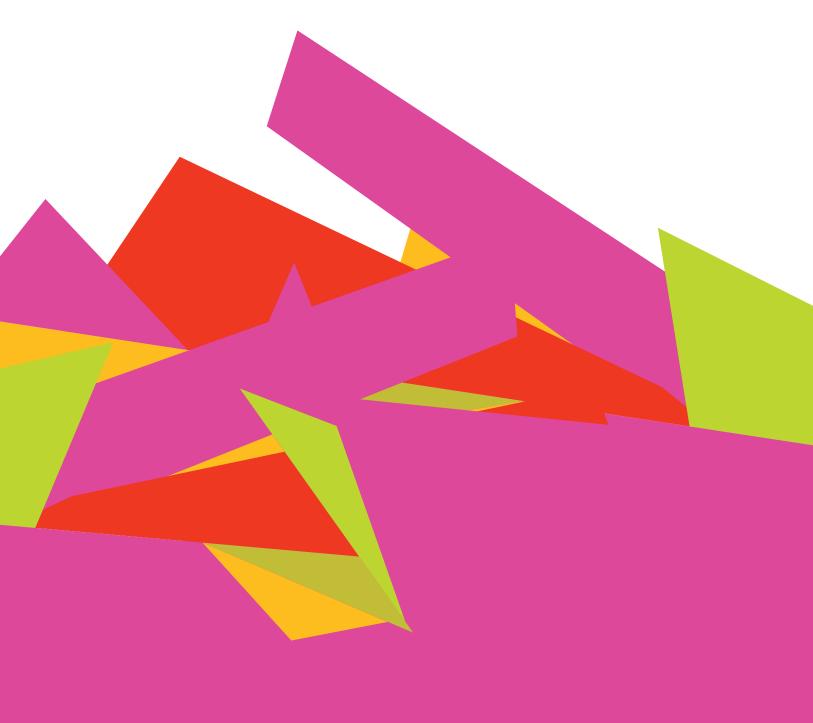*"Funding has helped us do simple things like meet face to face to develop our strategy."*

Funding is essential to securing not only the material resources for advocacy activities, but also providing an opportunity to compensate young people for their leadership. When there is funding that covers the time needed to build a movement in a region like Sub-Saharan Africa, it empowers young advocates to focus on the success of the coalition without compromising their other pressing priorities. When there is funding for young advocates to host strategic meetings, disseminate their messages and travel to participate in local and global conversations, it levels the playing field and opens up otherwise closed doors.
[For more information, see the "Funding Youth Movements" brief in this learning series.]

3. Capacity-strengthening opportunities:

"These opportunities create a platform for the coalition members to improve things like communication skills and knowledge on running a coalition, ensuring our advocacy work is more effective."

As is the case with youth-led organizing in general, young advocates greatly benefit from expanding their skills and knowledge. Capacity building opportunities – from technical seminars on SRH topics to trainings on policy reform – provide skills and also inspire young leaders to continue mobilizing for change.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

New and emerging leadership approaches

Solutions to the world's most urgent problems – from climate change to economic, racial and gender inequalities – cannot be found by operating within the same paradigm that created them. Today's generation of 1.8 billion young people has inherited these problems and are tasked with the challenge of finding solutions. However, very rarely are young leaders fully supported with all the tools they need to radically re-envision our world and create sustainable change.

Most current approaches to leadership-building seek to provide young people with a set of interpersonal or project management skills, while others focus on self-discovery and mindfulness.

Such approaches to leadership are incomplete and result in flawed solutions that are unable to achieve the sustainable change the world needs. Often, we encounter the following partial responses to global problems:

1. Narrow technical solutions:
Building effective responses can create temporary solutions for certain problems, but as soon as one problem is resolved, others emerge.

Example: Distributing malaria bed-nets, which stop the current outbreak but, by themselves, do not strengthen health systems to prevent future outbreaks.

2. Ineffective policy changes:
Engaging in policy work and advocating with decision-makers is important, but often the policies that are formulated and the institutions that are built do not solve the problems they set out to tackle. Instead they often replicate existing power structures, get stuck in institutional paralysis or are sabotaged by underlying social, cultural or economic dynamics.

Example: Advocating for legal change to increase justice on sexual violence, without addressing barriers that stop people from accessing the legal system, or sexist attitudes amongst police, lawyers and the judiciary.

3. Isolated journeys of self-discovery:
Consciousness-based training programs and books on self-awareness pave the way for some (usually privileged) individuals to feel empowered. However, these initiatives, by themselves, do little to create social change at scale.

Example: A meditation and yoga retreat that creates a space for self-discovery and mindfulness, without direction on how to address systemic issues of inequality and discrimination.

Fortunately, there are now new and more comprehensive approaches to leadership, such as "radical transformative leadership," a concept developed by Monica Sharma, a former United Nations official. This model aims to:

(1) Build shared commitment based on universal values;
(2) Shift policies, norms, systems and structures; and
(3) Solve problems, in order to generate equitable and sustainable results.

Sharma drew on her practical experience in development, as well as on the latest research in areas such as social psychology, communications and systems thinking. This concept now underpins a growing set of leadership programs, including:

• **Leadership for Equity & Opportunity**
  by Rise Together in Oakland, CA
  (risetogetherbayarea.org/leadership)
• **Stewardship for Radical Transformation**
  in Auroville, India (auroville.org.in)
• **Unleashing Full Potential for Social Transformation**
  in Mumbai, India (tiss.edu)

It is important for donors, implementers and young leaders to demand more comprehensive approaches to leadership. When thinking about funding, designing or selecting a youth leadership program, here are some questions to ask:

1. What are the unstated assumptions of the theory of leadership underlying the program?
Some programs assume that certain traits result in leadership, and others focus on learned behaviours or proficiencies, with the theory that learning a few skills can make someone a leader. Most programs assume that a certain kind of leadership is best, denying young participants opportunities to develop their own leadership style. Many approaches prioritize individual leadership without providing frameworks for building coalitions through collective leadership. In selecting a leadership program, make sure it's cross-cultural, inter-disciplinary and evidence-based – and most importantly – that it states its assumptions upfront.

2. Does the program focus on knowing oneself and others differently?
To be successful, youth leadership programs need to create spaces for young people to challenge their existing personal narratives, build awareness of the systems within which they operate and learn to interact with others through the lens of shared values, rather than narrowly defined social identities. Leadership programs must create spaces for thoughtful reflection and personal growth.

3. Does the program foster a systems approach?

In order to find solutions to complex problems, leadership programs must build competencies that allow participants to analyse inter-connected political, social and economic systems, rather than looking at problems in isolation. Participants must be able to identify root causes, map actors and understand how they interact with each other.

4. Does the program provide easy tools to make ordinary processes and spaces transformative?

It is relatively easy to start new initiatives, but it is extremely difficult to transform existing practices and processes, and to align them towards achieving sustainable impact. Too many youth leadership programs are oriented solely around creating new projects, without providing tools for taking existing programs to a new level. Programs should also provide tools and frameworks to facilitate change from within large organizations, institutions and structures.
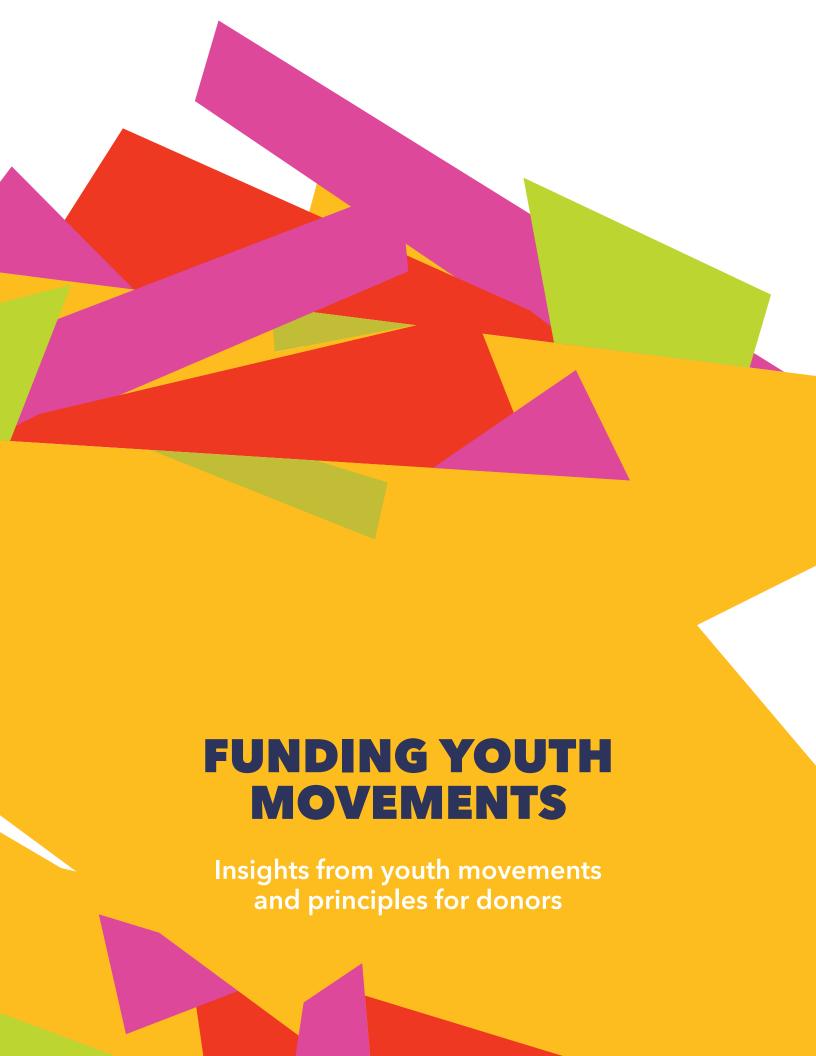
There is an urgent need to build the capacities of a new generation of young leaders and organizations. With effective leadership programs, it is possible to build competencies that allow diverse actors to work together to design and generate responses that draw on their most deeply held values, strategically shift systems and tackle the root causes of social injustice. Funders, implementers and partners need to ask more of the leadership programs we provide young people.

REFERENCES

1. Borrell-Carrió, Francesc, Anthony L. Suchman, and Ronald M. Epstein. "The biopsychosocial model 25 years later: principles, practice, and scientific inquiry." The Annals of Family Medicine 2.6 (2004): 576-582.
2. Emberling, Dennis. "Stages of Leadership and Organizational Development" (www.developmentalconsulting.com)
3. Ganz, Marshall. "Public narrative, collective action, and power." *Accountability through public opinion: From inertia to public action* (2011): 273-289.
4. Henderson, Allan. "Commitment-in-action Programme" GHJ Consulting, 2005
5. Krebs, Valdis, and June Holley. "Building smart communities through network weaving." Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (2006).
6. Rogers, Everett M. *Diffusion of innovations*. Simon and Schuster, 2010.
7. Sharma, Monica. "Leadership and Capacity Development." United Nations 3.
8. Sharma, Monica. "Personal to planetary transformation." kosmos (2007): 31-5.
9. Sharma, Monica. *Radical Transformational Leadership: Strategic Action for Change Agents*. North Atlantic Books, 2017.
10. United Nations Development Programme, "Leadership for Results: Leadership Development Programme Strategy Note", UNDP 2005
11. Wasserman, Ilene C., and Beth Fisher-Yoshida. *Communicating Possibilities: A Brief Introduction to the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)*. Taos Institute Publications, 2017.

FUNDING YOUTH MOVEMENTS

Insights from youth movements
and principles for donors

Movement building is typically not a donor-driven initiative. Rather, movements stem from constituents who are affected by an issue and mobilize to take collective action. But at a certain point, movements need funds to sustain themselves and scale up their efforts, as well as track and communicate their impact. This is especially true for movements led by young people, as well as other disenfranchised groups, because they are unlikely to have their own incomes or financial resources.

This document outlines some key principles and ways of working that donors can apply to funding youth movements. It builds on lessons learned from the Torchlight Collective's programming alongside youth-led advocacy coalitions, as well as experiences from other organizations. There are many different funding mechanisms, so utilize the principles that work best for your organization.

Work in partnership with young people to design funding processes:

Involve young people when you are designing your funding program, including funding priorities, to ensure that it addresses their lived realities. One way to have meaningful involvement is to identify existing young leaders from the relevant geographical contexts and/or communities through a transparent and inclusive process, and then establish an advisory committee. This committee can help you through the steps of grant design, selection and more. Young people can also help develop proposal formats that are simple and easy to use for their peers and support grant monitoring and evaluation.

Practical tips
- Discuss the power relations that exist between your organization and young people before starting a funding relationship. Power is about more than 'who has the money' - it is also about knowledge, time, information, north-south, old-young and so on.
- Ensure that there is clarity on roles and responsibilities of those involved as advisors.
- Compensate young people for their time as you would with any other strategic advisors.
- Accept proposals in multiple and local languages to allow individuals and groups from diverse communities to apply.
- Short-term grants make long-term planning difficult; provide reasonable funding cycles and multi-year grants, along with sufficient funding, when possible.
- Spend time thinking about sustainability (what it means and what it looks like) along with the young people from the very beginning and put in place an exit strategy that they understand and are invested in so that ceasing funding does not result in organization collapse.

Partner with the 'key / affected populations' of young people:

Your funding priorities should be informed by the young people who are most affected by the issues on which you and your foundation or group focus. Those most affected are also those who are key to addressing the issues. For example, if you want to focus on reducing unsafe abortion in a community, the affected populations would include young women seeking abortions, at risk of unwanted or unintended pregnancy and those having high unmet needs for contraception.

Practical tips
- Seek out partnerships with existing networks of young people from the key / affected populations to understand their situation, needs and lived realities.
- Include young people from these groups on any relevant advisory committees and ensure that they have the support to contribute effectively.
- Make sure that the privacy and confidentiality of young people are protected and that others in your organization are sensitized to their particular needs.
- Approach this work in a non-judgmental way and create a space where young people from the key / affected populations feel heard and respected.

Invest in capacity strengthening and organizational development:

Making true and meaningful investments in youth movements requires additional time and resources from donors. If you are funding youth advocates or youth-led organizations, then invest in strengthening their capacities or in organizational development. This investment allows funds for programs and activities to be more effective. It also mitigates the fallout of high turnover, as individuals tend to move around, and young people age out of leadership roles.

Practical tips
- Invest time and effort into also strengthening the capacities of adults in your organization on how to work in partnership with young people.
- Fund mentorship systems for young leaders where adult organizations or mentors support them through program planning, resource mobilization, documentation and communication, impact assessment and due diligence.
- Consider making capacity-strengthening resources, including resource people (not just toolkits!), available that are specifically intended to help youth organizations apply for your funding.
- Build in decent salaries - young people who work hard deserve remuneration for their work just like adults.

Fund holistic youth leadership programs:

But first define youth leadership for your organization! Preferably as being inclusive, feminist, transformative, and regenerative (i.e. gets younger people involved and knows when and how to age out). While there are many examples of youth leadership building, too often young people become the kinds of leaders that adults model for them without having the time, space and knowledge to shape new or responsive forms of leadership. This means that many young people want to hold on to power once they get it, much like the adults around them. This kind of leadership is not inclusive, feminist, transformative or regenerative. The whole point of a youth movement should be that it is led by young people. Therefore, when young leaders age out, they need to be able to relinquish power to a second line of leadership. [For more information, see the "Building Youth Leadership for Collective Action" brief in this learning series.]

Practical tips
- Work with young people to define the youth leadership model that the movement wants to adopt.
- Enable youth movements to establish leadership and accountability structures based on the mutually agreed definition of youth leadership.
- Work with the movement to ensure that the young people in leadership positions are the best fit, not only based on age, but also other criteria co-defined with the movement.

Synergize and synchronize:

Youth-led advocacy and movement-building has seen momentum for several years now. Different donors fund their own versions of youth movements, including iterations of youth engagement (e.g. "youth participation," "leadership development," and "youth development"). Creating several pools of youth advocates can create unhealthy competition between these advocates rather than building solidarity for the broader causes.

In other words, donors need to speak to each other. Building a cohesive youth movement – or youth movements across different regions, issues, and populations – is necessary for young people to bring about change. Ensuring that youth movements, youth advocates and youth-led organizations synchronize their efforts also demonstrates aid effectiveness and provides more sustainable impact in the long-term.

Practical tips
- Pool together donor resources to create larger and more flexible funding grants (but make sure that this doesn't equal added bureaucracy for grantees!)
- Engage in donor knowledge exchange or establish a donor hub where good practices are shared.

- Create opportunities for young advocates to network with each other, collaborate and create a community of learning. This could be through in-person meetings and/or online fora.
- Fund network-type grants that incentivize collective action across networks of youth-led organizations.
- Be an ally when it counts - build relationships with feminist, inclusive youth movements and find common ground that will contribute to larger, collective human rights goals.

Be transparent and flexible:

Don't keep youth organizations in the dark about your funding systems and processes! Youth organizations need to fully understand where you are coming from and your theory of change. Be very clear about your expectations from grantees. Try to also build flexibility into your funding systems to allow young people to make mistakes and learn from them, as well as access technical assistance along the way. Flexibility is also necessary because context is everything.

Practical tips
- Ensure that your grantees are aware of the flexibility within the funds and view your guidance as supportive rather than prescriptive.
- Identify key resource people to support troubleshooting and problem-solving.
- Make your systems responsive to the realities faced by youth groups and movements. Many youth groups are not registered or do not have financial entities due to lack of capacity, legal reasons, unsupportive governments, etc.
- Build in budgets and time for linking and learning where youth movements can link and learn with other movements, i.e. those more experienced, other 'marginalized' groups, etc. in order to grow.
- Encourage creativity and innovation because young people have the potential to come up with new solutions/approaches to existing problems as long as you provide them with the resources and the flexibility to do so.
- Be aware of safety and security of the young people you work with, as many young people work in dangerous contexts and topics. Provide them with the tools (e.g. digital safety) and resource people to ensure their safety, including space for 'self-care.'
- Use a combination of traditional (i.e. email) and new communication methods that are youth-accessible, such as WhatsApp and Slack.

Be an inspiration to other donors on youth movement building:

Other than specific participatory grant makers like the FRIDA Fund and the Red Umbrella Fund – which let their communities shape the funding priorities – there are very few donors that explicitly fund movements. If

you want to fund a youth movement, then learn from the experiences of these funds, and share your insights with other donors so that they can be inspired as well.

Practical tips
- Document your own process of funding a youth movement along with its impact to contribute to the evidence base.
- Talk to other donors about ways to work together and coordinate based on best practices.

www.torchlightcollective.org/learning

f /TheTorchlightCollective **🐦** Torchlight_org **📷** /thetorchlightcollective