

GLOBAL FINANCING FACILITY CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

The aim of this paper is to provide the Investors Group (IG) with an overview of the Global Financing Facility (GFF) investments in civil society organizations (CSOs) and youth-led organizations (YLOs), specifically highlighting how these investments have supported efforts to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N). The paper takes stock of progress made in delivering on the [GFF CSO and youth engagement framework](#) (2021–2025), and outlines priority areas requiring further investments and efforts to fully realize the partnership goals to elevate the role of civil society and youth in advancing its mission.

ACTION REQUESTED

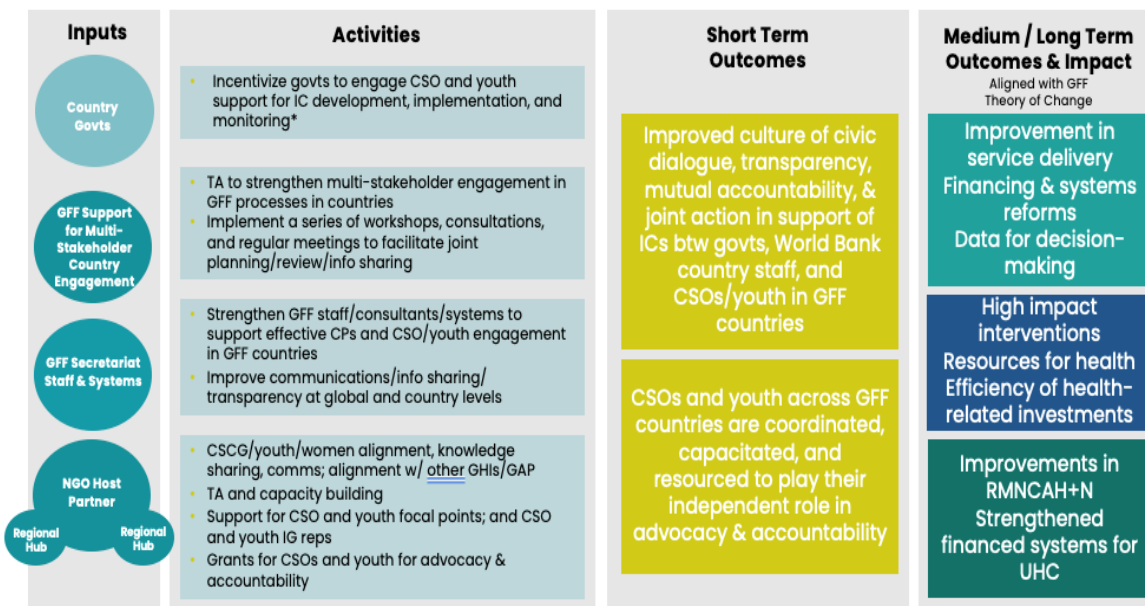
The Investors Group (IG) is requested to provide guidance on GFF CSO approach to date and on the next phase of CSO and youth engagement.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Since its inception in 2015, the GFF has gradually increased civil society and youth engagement focusing on increased investment and technical assistance, and elevating voice and collaboration with civil society and youth-led organizations. This includes also increased representation of civil society and youth in national country platforms and the IG, a growing coalition as part of the Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG) and close ties with other key CSO constituencies, including the Global Fund, Gavi, CSO networks, and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (PMNCAH).

Launched in 2020, the CSO and youth engagement framework (see **figure 1**) has helped to accelerate efforts for more consistent, coherent, and sustainable support for civil society and youth engagement across the partnership and from country to global level. This engagement has relied on four key inputs as delivery modalities: (1) working through country government; (2) providing GFF support for country engagement; (3) leveraging GFF Secretariat staff and systems; and (4) supporting through as an NGO host partner.

Figure 1. The GFF Civil Society Organization and Youth Engagement Framework



*This activity will not necessarily be implemented in all countries, as it depends on the government and country context and funding procurement decisions.

Source: Global Financing Facility.

KEY INPUTS

- 1. Country Governments and GFF Support for Multistakeholder Country Engagement:** Strengthening CSO, youth, and women-led organization engagement in country platforms and IC implementation through dedicated technical assistance, stronger dialogue and government incentives for engagement in the investment case implementation process

Over the past five years, the GFF partnership has supported improved multistakeholder engagement in countries to support an environment of civic dialogue, mutual accountability, transparency, gender equality, and

inclusivity—in alignment with the GFF’s core principles. This included addressing challenges with capacity, incentives and resources for effective engagement and coordination among government, World Bank and GFF staff, and CSOs and youth. Further efforts were made to facilitate better information sharing and review processes to facilitate mutual accountability and joint action.

For instance, the Global Youth Platform was established to focus on coordination, resource sharing, and capacity building among young leaders within GFF-supported countries. It aims to foster a youth-led movement, leveraging their expertise to accelerate progress toward countries’ goals in health and nutrition and ensure representation of youth as part of program design and implementation. At the country level, these efforts have resulted in increased representation of CSOs and youth in national country platforms, where they participate in technical working groups and contribute to investment case planning, development, and monitoring as well as annual work planning and performance reviews.

In line with GFF objectives of bringing the CSO agenda closer to cofinanced projects, the IC and country platform, some countries have been able to integrate citizen engagement activities within the project. This is the case in Senegal, where the Investing in Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Project (ISMEA) project, funded by the World Bank and GFF, has integrated CSO-led activities, in collaboration with the GFF youth coalition, and is exploring the scaling up of a GFF supported community social accountability youth-led project and used as a model across several countries in the region.

2. GFF Secretariat Staff and Systems: Leveraging GFF Secretariat staff and systems to support CSO, youth, and women-led organizations engagement across the GFF logic model

Governance: The GFF partnership has made efforts to ensure diverse representation of civil society and youth in the IG. Initially, there were only two CSO seats, one from a high-income and one from a low-income country. Recognizing the need for broader inclusion and responding to a request from youth advocates, the IG welcomed a youth representative to ensure a balance between francophone and anglophone voices. Each representative, including the youth seat, has an alternate, resulting in a total of six CSOs and youth within the IG.

Key performance indicators: Since the development of the CSO and youth engagement framework, the GFF Secretariat has integrated new key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress of its 2021–2025 strategy. These indicators include tracking CSO and youth participation on country platforms and in development of investment case plans. According to preliminary data shared with the IG in November 2023, in 17 GFF countries, civil society and youth have actively been involved in the development of the country investment case. While this served as an important step to track progress, it also showed the need to disaggregate the indicator to better capture the breakdown of civil society vs. youth participation. This change is now being incorporated and will be reflected in next year’s reporting.

Strategy: Over the past three years, the GFF has strengthened CSO and youth engagement, communications, and consultation at global and country levels. At the same it has also integrated CSO engagement into core areas of its strategy.

- *Gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR):* CSOs and youth are instrumental to the delivery of the GFF SRHR Acceleration Plan as well as the Gender Roadmap, whether it is to advocate for SRHR and gender policy reforms, establish accountability mechanisms to ensure the policies are

implemented, or ensure quality equitable health services are delivered to those most in need. For example, in Liberia, Public Health Initiative Liberia works in a comprehensive approach that bridges policy advocacy and community-based interventions. The organization participates in high-level policy dialogues addressing adolescent and women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, including child marriage, teenage pregnancy within the national country platform. Additionally, they work at the grassroots level by engaging with school health clubs and communities.

- *Nutrition:* CSO nutrition coalitions have been tracking nutrition commitments made by their governments, successfully advocating for nutrition integration into budgets and reporting on the effectiveness of nutrition interventions. For example, in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, Scaling Up Nutrition coalitions, supported by grants from the GFF Hub through PAI, collaborate with national and local governments to influence budgets and integrate nutrition indicators in health programs. In Senegal, a youth organization is specifically addressing the issue of adolescent girls' anemia through advocacy efforts in one of the GFF supported region.
- *Health financing:* Recognizing the need to coordinate and align efforts to support the CSO health financing agenda, several global health initiatives (GHIs), including Gavi, the GFF, the Global Fund, PMNCH and UHC 2030 launched the [Joint Learning Agenda](#) (JLA) on Health Financing for Universal Health Coverage in 20 Sub-Saharan countries. (see **box 1**).
- *Data and evidence:* The GFF has recently begun implementing activities for the Adolescent Health Learning, Action, and Benchmarking network (ADLAB), which is working to build the evidence and learning on effective adolescent health interventions, increasing investments, making health programs more responsive to adolescents’ needs, and redefining the measurement of adolescent health in a holistic way (see **box 2**).

Box 1. Joint Learning Agenda

Leveraging and expanding on previous efforts such as the [Global Action Plan](#), [Strategic Health Financing](#) and the [Community and Civil Society Engagement Accelerators](#), the Joint Learning Agenda (JLA) program, managed by the GFF, aims to strengthen the capacity and collaboration among civil society organizations to advocate for increased domestic investment in health. The program, implemented by WACI Health and Impact Santé Afrique, received a total investment of US\$1,060,000 from the GFF (US\$400,000), Gavi (US\$600,000), and the Global Fund (US\$60,000). Over 400 CSO representatives across Sub-Saharan Africa have received training in health financing, universal health coverage (UHC) advocacy, and evidence-based policy analysis, equipping them to engage effectively with decision makers. In addition to the training of trainers program, CSOs have established a community of practice with active collaboration within countries and across the region. In Cameroon, a coalition of over 360 CSOs focused on health financing and UHC spearheaded the “CSU Enrollment Challenge.” Partnering with the Ministry of Public Health, this successful initiative resulted in an increase from 145,000 to 2 million new UHC enrollments between August and December 2023. In Madagascar, CSO advocacy has supported an increase in the health budget from 7.8 percent in 2022 to 8.48 percent in 2023. The budget for contraceptives procurement doubled in 2023. Following a one-year media campaign, the Tanzania CSO coalition, led by the Mkapa Foundation, won a major victory with the president’s signature of the country’s universal health insurance bill.

Box 2. Youth Voices Driving Implementation Research for Adolescent Health

The GFF has recently begun implementing activities within the Adolescent Health Learning, Action, and Benchmarking network (ADLAB). ADLAB's objectives include strengthening evidence and learning on effective adolescent health interventions, increasing investments, making health programs more responsive to adolescents' needs, and redefining the measurement of adolescent health in a holistic way. The project focuses on youth engagement in implementation research, leveraging digital data collection to measure adolescents' perceptions and experiences, and supporting youth participation in national policy processes. A partnership with the Global Youth Platform is helping to ensure youth are represented and meaningfully engage in the ADLAB Steering Committee, can contribute to broader strategic discussions with partner organizations working on adolescent health, and inform planning and operations. In Madagascar, the youth network participated in the revision of the RMNCAH-N investment case to ensure youth priorities are reflected. In Cambodia, a nine-month fellowship program for 15 young health policy fellows will develop adolescent health case studies supported by research mentors, with dissemination through national and regional platforms.

NGO Host Partner: Enable a stronger and independent civil society and youth-led movement for women, children and adolescent health across GFF countries through a single NGO host partner

Through a World Bank project, the GFF CSO Host Organization, [Population Action International](#) (PAI), is supporting the implementation of the strategy. Specifically, this project key objectives were (details can be found in the [project paper](#)):

- **Coordinating a strong platform for the GFF CSO and youth constituency** through the GFF CSCG to ensure a unified voice and maximize their influence on global health agendas.
- **Providing technical assistance and strengthening capacity** to empower CSOs and youth with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively participate in GFF processes, contribute meaningfully to country investment cases, and hold governments accountable.
- **Allocating small grants for advocacy and accountability**, enabling CSOs and youth to lead impactful advocacy campaigns and monitor GFF investments in country.

Since 2022, PAI has disbursed more than US\$2.7 million in small grants to 51 organizations across 28 GFF partner countries (see **table 1**).

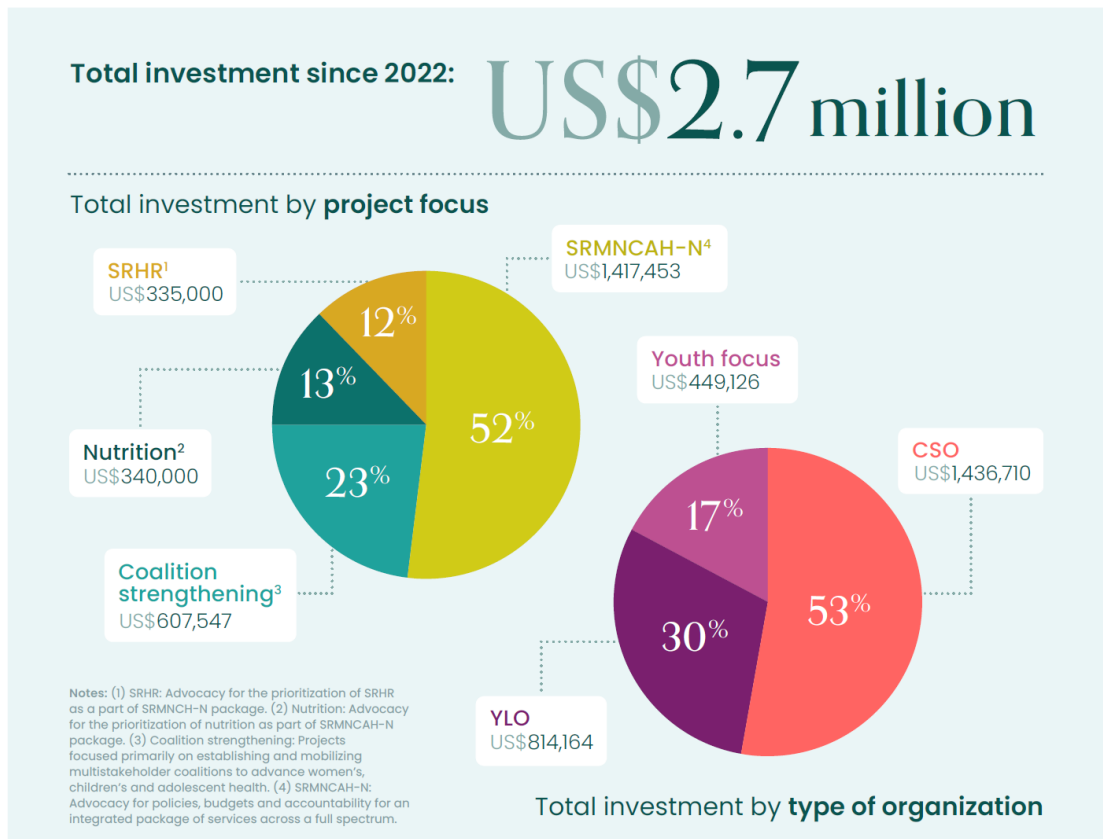
Table 1. Select Results of Grant Disbursements through PAI since 2022

COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION NAME	ACHIEVEMENT
Ghana	Centre for Capacity Improvement for the Wellbeing of the Vulnerable (CIWED)	Enhanced the capabilities of CSOs, youth leaders, and the media to increase community engagement and advocacy, leading to better focus from Ghana Health Service, district assemblies, and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development toward health issues.
Niger	Tous Unis pour la Nutrition TUN	Sustained engagements and advocacy from the coalition led to commitments from mayors, deputy mayors, secretaries general, and government technical service managers to consider nutrition in the 2024–2029 Communal Development Plans (PDC) and dedicate a budget for malnourished children in their municipalities.
Nigeria	Slum and Rural Health Initiative	Established women-led groups in 10 rural communities to disseminate and educate women and adolescents through the Simbihealth app, providing comprehensive sexuality education, mental health education, and life skills.
Kenya	Organization of African Youth	Mobilized 17 youth organizations to advocate for adolescent and youth health, leading to the establishment of Kenya's first adolescent health policy (2024–2030) and the removal of proposed family planning service fees.
Malawi	Health and Rights Education Programme	Advocacy resulted in the national health budget allocation increasing from 8.5 percent to 12.2 percent, significantly enhancing funding for women's and adolescent health.
Mali	Centre Sahélien de Prestations, d'Etudes, d'Ecodéveloppement et de Démocratie Appliquée (CSPEEDA)	Secured commitments for budget increases for sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (SRMNCAH-N) programs, including CFAF 3.6 million (US\$6,000) for community health worker capacity strengthening and CFAF 7 million (US\$11,500) to equip the Zana community health center, reducing patient travel distance by 60 km.
Mozambique	Associação Observatório do Cidadão	Secured increased funding and policy support for adolescent sexual and reproductive health through robust advocacy efforts.
Sierra Leone	Health Alert	Successfully advocated for the removal of user fees for maternal health services in the project area, despite the policy for no out-of-pocket payment.
Uganda	Faith for Family Health Initiative (3FHi)	Advocacy improved funding for reproductive health commodities, increasing the budget allocation by 7 percent. The organization also developed a commitments and policy tracker for the investment case, endorsed by key stakeholders.
Uganda	National Youth Health Network (NYHN)	Conducted a cost-benefit analysis of youth friendly services and oriented regional leaders on national and global RMNCAH-N processes. Held an adolescent health forum in Busoga to address gaps in girls' access to menstrual hygiene commodities.

Source: PAI and Global Financing Facility.

Figure 2 presents highlights of GFF grant allocations, by project focus and type of organization:¹

Figure 2. GFF Grant Allocations to CSO and Youth-Led Partners, by Project Focus and Type of Organization



LESSONS LEARNED

Through various and ongoing feedback mechanisms, including supervision missions, surveys, and workshops, three core areas have emerged as key lessons.

- Creating an enabling environment:** While the GFF has made efforts to include CSOs and youth in country-level processes, experiences from implementation had revealed ongoing challenges and limitations for meaningful engagement in some cases. This necessitated strengthening structures and processes and mapping the right CSO and youth partners to better understand their role and contribution to country health and nutrition objectives. These initiatives, which include country dialogues, consultations, and roundtables with governments, GFF and World Bank colleagues and other partners, aimed at improving meaningful civil society and youth engagement in national policy processes, local governance, thus creating spaces for continued collaboration. However, there is potential for bringing the CSO and youth

¹ Notes: (1) SRHR: Advocacy for the prioritization of SRHR as a part of SRMNCH-N package. (2) Nutrition: Advocacy for the prioritization of nutrition as part of SRMCAH-N package. (3) Coalition strengthening: Projects focused primarily on establishing and mobilizing multistakeholder coalitions to advance women's, children's and adolescent health. (4) SRMCAH-N: Advocacy for policies, budgets and accountability for an integrated package of services across a full spectrum.

engagement closer to cofinanced projects, the IC and country platform to ensure meaningful involvement across design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of country programs. The addition of a GFF Secretariat-tracked KPI is also an important way to ensure country processes have engagement with CSOs and youth. The grants and technical assistance through the host organization demonstrated the potential that can be leveraged by CSOs to engage in country dialogues; however, ongoing feedback has pointed to the need for deeper engagement. At the same time, bilateral partners can continue playing a facilitation role in the engagement of civil society and youth.

- **Direct support to CSOs:** CSOs and youth organizations have expressed appreciation for the grant support through the GFF. However, given the short-term (12 months) nature and size of the grants, CSOs and youth lack the financial stability to plan long-term and face disruptions. This also hinders their ability to effectively strengthen their capacity in advocacy, accountability, resource mobilization and health financing. This is especially true for smaller, grassroots and youth-led organizations. Advocacy takes time, and the constantly changing landscape in the GFF countries requires sustained multiyear engagement for CSOs and youth to influence policy and programs, which is difficult with short-term funding. Longer-term grants can help ensure civil society and youth-led projects integrate RMNCH-N data collection, analysis and use, while also monitoring the progress and impact they have on the ground.
- **Differentiated support for technical assistance:** Across GFF partner countries, demand is increasing for technical assistance in health financing, accountability, and community-level result monitoring among CSOs and youth. However, due to the diverse nature of these organizations, there is a need for a tiered approach to technical assistance to better address their needs. This is due to the diversity among CSOs and youth, but also a difference in understanding the GFF process and model, depending on how long their country has been engaged in the GFF. Some of the successful projects, which serve as best practices already used across partner countries, are also at a maturation time that would require additional support to scale up their interventions.
- **Results:** Ongoing efforts have been helping to capture results linked to the work of CSOs in support of this agenda, but there is even more emphasis and further resourcing needed to capture the results, process and learning of this work. For example, in the case of many youth-led organizations, they often lack the capacity to effectively collect, analyze, and translate data into evidence or compelling impact stories. Further resourcing could provide tailored technical assistance and mentoring to bridge this gap, capitalizing on and strengthening successful initiatives that have matured and are already demonstrating impact. This would not only enhance the grantees' ability to measure and communicate their achievements but also contribute to a stronger evidence base for the broader agenda.
- **Greater coordination and collaboration among existing platforms:** In recognition of broader efforts in the global health architecture to ensure greater collaboration, such as the Lusaka Agenda, it would be important for the CSO-supported work supported by GFF to also maximize alignment opportunities. There are ongoing opportunities to improve coordination of CSO efforts happening across other partners, such as the Global Fund, Gavi, PMNCH, Family Planning 2030 (FP2030), UHC 2030 and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This would be an important step for helping raise more collectively advocacy and accountability efforts on the global stage and in-country.

WAY FORWARD: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Maintaining the momentum over the coming years and providing ongoing resources are crucial to ensuring civil society and youth continue their meaningful engagement in national and global processes, as outlined in the analysis and lessons. The questions below are to provide a stimulus for discussion as the Secretariat seeks guidance on the way forward.

- How can we further improve funding and technical assistance structures to enhance CSO and youth engagement? What are the changes required to support a different approach? What are the right trade-offs to consider?
- What are the specific areas where specialized training and technical assistance would have the most impact on the capacity and effectiveness of CSOs and youth?
- How can we deepen the integration of CSO activities within existing projects to maximize efforts and impact?
- What are the areas for collaboration that can help drive more impact?