

The EMpower Girls and Gender Strategy



EMpower has a rich history of funding and supporting programmes and organisations that work with the most marginalised young people around the world—helping to improve their economic well-being, enabling them to lead safe and healthy lives, and broadening their access to inclusive learning.

Girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people are a particular focus as they battle the compound effects of multiple forms of inequality. They are at the bottom of every social hierarchy and are least visible and heard. We recognise that transformative change in the life of a girl must involve her ecosystem—her family, her community, the boys and men in her life, and the institutions and systems with which she interacts (educational, economic, health, etc.).

Previously EMpower had done this work through specific girls- and gender-focused grants and initiatives; now we are prioritising and integrating it throughout our entire portfolio. With a new sharpened approach to our girls and gender work, we are crystallising our vision and breathing life to our strategy. We have developed guidelines for our staff that explore our core principles and highlight our perspective on positioning girls and gender at the centre of our work.

We're building a world where all young people at the margins, especially girls, have the skills, opportunities, and power to live their full potential.

A strategy at two levels: Strengthening Organisations and Programmes to achieve better outcomes for young people

PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Supporting and investing in girls and gender non-conforming young people

Supporting and investing in boys and young men as programme participants and as part of the ecosystem

Investing in age-differentiated and intersectional programming

Bringing together young people and local organisations to strengthen learning and solidarity

ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES

Investing in gender-responsive and transformative approaches and organisations

Co-learning with local grantee partner organisations

Changing programme practice to encourage more gender-transformative and gender-inclusive work

Amplifying best practices and innovation

Strengthening grantee partners to be more gender-transformative organisations

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Centring girls and gender non-conforming young people

Investing in gender-responsive and transformative approaches and organisations

Recognising intersectionality and power as core



Three main principles regarding girls and gender underpin all of our work.

1 PRINCIPLE

Centre adolescent girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people and meaningfully involve them in decision making on programmes and approaches.

Putting girls' expertise, voices, capabilities, and ideas at the heart of our programming helps us draw from and build on their rich experiences and create spaces for them to learn from each other, and build their confidence to share their ideas with the world around them.

2 PRINCIPLE

Invest in gender-responsive and -transformative approaches.

Our investments in young people must strive for gender-transformative and -responsive approaches to encourage awareness among all people of gender roles and norms, challenge the distribution and power by gender, and promote equity for girls and gender non-conforming young people so they can thrive.

3 PRINCIPLE

Recognise power and intersectionality.

We recognise the intersecting layers of identity that affect adolescent girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people, and strive to upend harmful power dynamics within relationships, families, communities, and the international development sector itself.

We put these principles into action at two levels: the programmes we fund and the organisations we support.

Our goal is to support equity and an enabling environment for all young people.

We support and invest in girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people, recognising that they face the greatest barriers to full economic and social participation and access to opportunities.

We support and invest in boys and young men as participants in the programmes we fund and because they are key players in the ecosystem of adolescent girls and gender non-conforming young people.

We invest in intersectional and age-differentiated programming, as "adolescence" is a pivotal time, but it is neither monolithic nor homogenous. The needs of a 12-year-old girl differ dramatically from those of an 18-year-old girl.



We invest in opportunities that bring together young people and local organisations to strengthen the learning among them and build solidarity.

We invest in emerging organisations that are led by individuals with lived experience of the organisation's focus issues and the perspectives and communities they aim to serve, lift up, and/or represent.

We invest in and embark on a learning journey with local grantee organisations.

Ultimately, we aim to shift the narrative and amplify best practices and innovation around adolescent programmes—contributing to a new normal where girls and young women are empowered and have their voices heard.

This approach will help us and our partners assess how programmes are:

- Addressing gender
Engaging girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people
Creating leadership opportunities
Building gender consciousness, and more.

We are optimistic and inspired by the transformation our grantee partners will unleash for young people, their families, and communities.

To learn more about our new guidelines, please contact:

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