

INSIGHTS

I.G.



Educate Girls 2016

# THE STATE OF FUNDING FOR GIRLS

**I.G. ADVISORS**  
IMPACT.GROWTH.

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# LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

In 2005, I wrote a master's dissertation on corporate programmes supporting girls. At the time, that list was very short, as were the resources available on the topic – but a lot has changed since then. Many other actors have jumped on the girl bandwagon – a sweeping tide of momentum has now become a veritable tsunami of efforts.

This research originally set out to provide a definitive landscaping of who was funding girls, how much they were funding, and why, covering corporate, foundation and individual donors. I.G.'s clients were asking for this data: both donors, who wanted to put their own investment in context, as well as NGOs looking to scale girls' programmes. We were humbled to find, like others before us, that this feat was more difficult than could be assumed.

However, our work led us to many amazing stories of how funders work collectively, collaboratively, and cross-sectorally to create real holistic and systemic change for girls. The individuals, initiatives and organisations we profile here – a girl-focused NGO, a family trust, a corporate partnership and a collective of foundation funders – are diverse in their approaches but share several key elements of what we would certainly call best practice, that we detail in the following pages. Our aim is for this inaugural I.G. Insights report to provide a clear path for funders planning to shift, grow or start their own funding for girls.

I'm not sure there has ever been a more important time to double down on our efforts to support girls. Recent political events seem to reflect what can feel like a geopolitical hostility toward women and girls in a way that has certainly shaken me to my core. It is more important than ever before that those with access to resources direct them to building up the next generation of women leaders, healthy mothers, stellar entrepreneurs and employees, public servants, artists, or whatever it is they want to be. We at I.G. hope we can help you on that journey.

## **Alisha Miranda**

Managing Director, I.G. Advisors

“INVESTING IN GIRLS HAS A CATALYTIC EFFECT – THEY TRANSFORM INTO PEOPLE WHO ARE ENERGETIC AND FULL OF HOPE. THAT TINY INVESTMENT IS LIKE MAGIC DUST.”

Lynne Smitham

Co-Founder, Kiawah Trust



## INTRODUCTION

# FINDING INSPIRATION IN THE GIRLS FUNDING SPACE

It was 2008 when a collaboration between the Nike Foundation, NoVo Foundation, and the Coalition for Adolescent Girls resulted in the Girl Effect film: this brief clip, one of the earliest viral videos in the development sector, led to a public awakening around the power of girls to create change in their families, communities and economies.

The past decade has witnessed an explosion of girl-focused NGOs, programmes and initiatives, fundraising and social media campaigns and platforms. Generally, the role girls play in economic development is well accepted, from the highest United Nations level – as evidenced by their inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals – to the grassroots campaigns of international and local NGOs. Once barely considered as a sub-category in larger funding pools, girls' issues have moved beyond the fringes into the spotlight. Mainstream companies, high profile celebrities, and others not typically associated with progressive causes have jumped on the girls' bandwagon.

One does not have to look far to find examples of private philanthropic actors – defined here as individuals, companies and foundations giving at the major gifts level – declaring a strong commitment to funding girls. From the UK Department for International Development's £300 million Girls' Education Challenge, to the NoVo Foundation's \$90 million commitment to adolescent girls and young women of colour, the private philanthropic sector appears to be rising to the challenge of funding and investing in girls.

While anecdotally it is clear that private donors across sectors – individuals, foundations and companies – have declared an interest in funding girls and the issues they face, this hasn't been backed up by much empirical research. At the same time, charities and non-profits that focus on girls are proliferating, as is the inclusion of girls into existing development programmes. How are funders rising to this challenge? Does the action measure up to the hype?

This edition of I.G. Insights looks at the state of funding for girls across private sources. The research reviewed organisations and individuals investing in girl-focused organisations, specifically for girls. It includes four case studies of inspiring practice and partnerships: Standard Chartered Bank, the Kiawah Trust, the With and For Girls Collective and Educate Girls. Finally, it concludes with our recommendations for funders on how to ensure the momentum around girls does not wane, and to create effective, collaborative funding mechanisms that allow girls to reach their full potential.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF QUANTIFYING MOMENTUM**

There has been an undeniable shift in the way women and girls' issues are discussed both on global policy and grassroots levels; however funding for girls still remains an under-studied donor behaviour. Some excellent studies have reviewed specific focus areas, including AWID's landmark research on funding for women and girls' rights,



“THERE HAS BEEN AN UNDENIABLE SHIFT IN THE WAY WOMEN AND GIRLS’ ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED BOTH ON GLOBAL POLICY AND GRASSROOTS LEVELS; HOWEVER FUNDING FOR GIRLS STILL REMAINS AN UNDER-STUDIED DONOR BEHAVIOUR”

and the Women’s Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University’s recent report on why and how individuals fund women and girls. The research that does exist tends to look only at youth, or conflates women and girls.

Our own research, undertaken on behalf of the Global Business Coalition for Education in 2015 reviewed corporate investment in girls’ education and provided insight into how companies who prioritise education work to invest in girls, but was limited by lack of actual financial data detailing the size of corporate investments.

The facts we know are limited, and in many cases out of date. Estimates on the amount

of philanthropic funding for women and girls’ issues hover at 7%, although that number was estimated in 2009. A 2013 report on human rights funding estimated that 23% focused on women and girls’ rights. Perhaps the most complete snapshot comes from AWID, who in 2014 reviewed 170 initiatives funding women and girls, totally \$14.6 billion.

Understanding funding flows from companies and individuals is particularly difficult. Many, if not most companies will not share publicly the amount of investment they make in social impact projects. In part, this is due to the fact that many corporate commitments take into account not just cash investment but staff time, product, intellectual property or other assets that they themselves may not have quantified. As more companies enter into commercial partnerships with NGOs as well, they see the cash amounts as confidential information. Major gifts from individuals are sometimes tracked when possible, such as in Coutts’ annual Million Dollar Donors report, but girls (or even women and girls) are not a category in that analysis.

The I.G. team are not aware of any studies that focus on funding for girls specifically, either on their own, as a portion of women and girls funding, or as a percentage of youth-focused funding. In 2016, we undertook our own desk-based research, aiming to provide a cross-section of private funding for girls. Because most donors don’t classify their own data in this way, we categorised donations or investments ourselves.

For the purposes of this report, we defined funding for girls as coming from a foundation or trust, a company (either through a CSR, commercial or philanthropic initiative) or an individual at a major gifts (\$5,000+) level, invested in girls, ages 0-18, or invested with girls at the centre of the impact objectives.

Our research uncovered 103 different grants or investments for girls made by 24 actors totalling \$137 million. Nearly 90% of the grants we reviewed had education as their



Osodi Emmanuel/Stars Foundation



Football for All Vietnam/Women's Football

focus. As we set out to analyse the data, we realised how difficult it was to draw any significant conclusions. We struggled to find data on individual and corporate donations. The foundation information we did review was skewed by large givers, including the Gates and NoVo Foundations.

Ultimately, what did this data tell us? Unfortunately, not very much on its own. Our research confirmed our suspicion that data is elusive, but it also left us with the challenge of finding other ways to communicate what effective funding for girls actually looks like in practice.

### **FINDING SUCCESS STORIES**

With the hunt for robust data at a standstill, we focused our efforts in looking to find where funding for girls had succeeded in creating both impact for girls and on funders themselves. Our advisory work and broad network led us to exceptional stories in this space, and we set out to find what successful girls funding initiatives had in common.

This report looks at four exceptional organisations or partnerships focused on creating change for girls. They are, on the surface, distinct: a British couple, a collective of foundations, a global bank and an NGO that

got its start in rural India. Yet they have all been successful in growing their work, gaining respect from the sector, and creating impact on girls as well as their own organisations.

Our case studies are varied in who they are, but share four key characteristics:

- 1 They don't do it alone:** funding girls means creating strong, sometimes challenging partnerships.
- 2 They understand context:** they are constantly looking outward to ensure they know their market and their audience as well as possible.
- 3 They invest for the long-term:** they acknowledge that real impact on girls' lives may not be seen for years or decades and plan their funding accordingly.
- 4 They know what they're good at:** they create collaborations where everyone uses their strongest skills to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

The following case studies detail how and why this inspiring practice works for donors and girls, to provide that catalytic "magic dust" that can change their futures and unlock their potential.



## CASE STUDY

# STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

**S**tandard Chartered Bank was one of the first companies to engage in funding girls in a meaningful way. In 2006, it launched a sport and life skills programme for adolescent girls in Delhi's urban slums called Goal. In over ten years, Goal has grown, changed and evolved: it now focuses on life skills, education and employment for adolescent girls, and has been rolled out in over 20 countries – reaching more than 285,000 girls with a universal but locally adaptable, play-based life skills education curriculum. But one thing has not changed: Standard Chartered's long-term investment in Goal and girls. Their five-year 2013 CGI commitment to reach an additional 500,000 girls brings their

investment to approximately \$5.5 million. This doesn't even include the full-time staff devoted to the programme, the hours of employee investment, and the other innovative ways the Bank is committed to these communities.

With more than a decade of knowledge and experience in the girls' funding space under its belt, Standard Chartered continues to enhance its offering to girls by capitalising on other assets across the core business. Their approach to partnership has not only catalysed significant social impact, but has also generated benefits to the Bank: a true win-win.

## EVOLVING TO ENGAGE THE CORE BUSINESS

The original business case for Goal when it first launched remains the same today and includes this core imperative: "The bank works in many low-income, low-equality markets," says Natasha Kwakwa, Director of the Goal Programme. "We know our investment in girls has an impact in the short, medium and long-term."

However, what has shifted in the business case is how the Bank's core business needs have been brought in. "The business thinks about Goal as more than just a community programme," she says. The Bank sees a correlation between investing in girls and solving its challenge of moving more women into senior management positions – a public commitment it has made.



Naz Foundation/Women Win

"Across the whole business, the bank is looking at recruitment, unconscious biases, and moving more women into middle and senior management. This links into supporting Goal," Kwakwa says, and with it the Bank's long-term view. "We have to start from girls in the communities where we operate to end up with a strong pipeline of entry level candidates."



Standard Chartered's senior leaders, including Anna Marrs, Regional CEO, ASEAN & SA and CEO of Commercial and Private Bank; Simon Cooper, CEO of Corporate and Institutional Banking; and Roselyne Renel, Chief Risk Officer, Europe & Americas/Global Head, Enterprise-Wide Risk Management, are champions of Goal. "They tell the Goal story across the business," Kwakwa says.

**STRONG PARTNERSHIPS  
IN CHALLENGING TIMES**

Unlike many of its peers, Standard Chartered successfully navigated the financial crisis of 2008, achieving record profits for several years. However, in 2016, in the wake of a downturn in several Asian markets, the Bank posted an annual loss. Like many companies, the Bank's community investment budget is

based on a percentage of its pre-tax income. "We have experienced times where the pot of funding hasn't been as big as perhaps we would have wanted it to be," Kwakwa says.

Goal continued to gain momentum in spite of the circumstances, which Kwakwa says was due to their strong partnerships. Women Win, Standard Chartered's global strategic partner for Goal since 2010, "is small, lean and efficient," Kwakwa states. "Their core business is using sport for social change for women and girls.



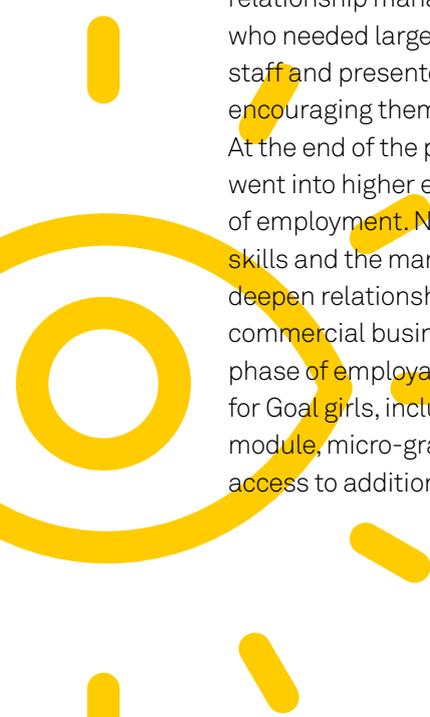
Right to Play Pakistan/Women Win

Close links to the core business have helped Goal evolve to meet the needs of its programme participants. A great example of this is when Standard Chartered ran a pilot with its commercial clients team in India to take 100 of their top performing "Goal Girls" and provide coaching and mentoring with a focus on their employability skills. The Bank's relationship managers brought in their clients who needed large numbers of entry-level staff and presented these Goal Girls to them, encouraging them to recruit from the Goal pool. At the end of the pilot, roughly 2/3 of the girls went into higher education or into some form of employment. Not only did the girls access skills and the market, but the Bank was able to deepen relationships with its clients. Now the commercial business team is funding the next phase of employability and entrepreneurship for Goal girls, including a new curriculum module, micro-grants for entrepreneurs, and access to additional job opportunities.

They've helped us be more efficient in our use of resources." Women Win has leveraged the Bank's investment to attract other funding, including a multi-year grant from the UK Department for International Development to support Goal. Women Win has, in turn, found Standard Chartered's encouragement

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**Natasha Kwakwa**  
Director of the Goal Programme





and support invaluable in its fundraising. Clementine Klijberg, Women Win's Business Development Director, says "we take the initiative for new partnerships, but the Bank supports this by connecting us to prospects, and by acting as our reference for important proposals."

Kwakwa also says the Bank "has been really efficient in our use of resources, making choices about what's most important." According to Kwakwa, employee volunteers have been a hugely valuable asset when establishing Goal in markets that the global team may not have prioritised for investment. In Mauritius, for example, the programme was started by a committed group of volunteers. Now, the Goal curriculum has been adopted by Mauritius' Ministry of Education and will be rolled out across the country's public schools this year.

## **TAKING COLLABORATION TO HEART**

Many funders claim to be collaborative, but Standard Chartered has demonstrated its willingness to work in partnership from early on. The Goal programme curriculum has been publicly available since it was designed, and can be accessed and downloaded by any organisation or individuals with a desire to replicate the success of the programme.

"We can't reach all of the hundreds of millions of girls around the world who could really benefit from this kind of programme ourselves," Kwakwa says. "Connecting with other organisations investing in girls can leverage our investment." This summer, the Bank will host its first-ever Goal Summit in South Africa to engage stakeholders across sectors, including donors such as companies from industries like technology and healthcare, academics, and other diverse actors across the social good space to understand together what the next phase is in empowering girls.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**1 Creating Partnerships:** Kwakwa values the flexibility of the Bank's partners to accommodate what she calls "weird and wacky ideas" that stem from Bank staff's enthusiasm for Goal. These ideas can be innovative but also may be challenging for an NGO to operationalise. "Our partners are really flexible," Kwakwa says. "They just get us."

**2 Understanding Context:** Goal is a global programme with a standard curriculum, but the Bank knows it needs to be adapted locally to fit the context. Kwakwa says they value the input of their local and global partners, and listen when they push back if something doesn't make sense in their market.

**3 Investing for the Long-Term:** "We don't start one-year relationships. We're in it for the long term," Kwakwa says. Investing in partners with a long-term vision has led to strong relationships that deepen over time. Their partners agree: "The Bank has had an unwavering commitment to Goal, and a clear vision and understanding that sustainable impact and change is only achieved through integrated, holistic approaches," Klijberg says.

**4 Capitalising on Core Skills:** The Bank's committed volunteers take on activities that use their professional skill set – like staff volunteers in Nigeria helping Goal's partner to improve their financial systems, or the Indonesian audit team translating the Goal curriculum into Bahasa, to name a few.

## CASE STUDY

## KIAWAH TRUST

**K**iawah Trust is a philanthropic multiplier, investing deeply and effectively in building a supportive funding ecosystem for girls. While their profile may be under the radar, their approach is decidedly extraordinary.

Founded in 2004 by Peter and Lynne Smitham, the trust developed a deep and meaningful partnership with Dasra, one of India's leading foundations focused on strategic philanthropy. As funders, they have

struck an unusual balance of being both hands-on (by deeply engaging in the cause and bringing other partners to the table) and hands-off (supporting their partners to spend their funds most effectively) in a way that has literally paid off for girls: together with Dasra, they have leveraged additional funding of over \$35 million into a cross-sector funding partnership called the Dasra Girl Alliance.

**GIRLS AS THE UPSTREAM SOLUTION**

The Smithams began their philanthropic journey deliberately joining multiple boards of US, UK and global charities, and undergoing workshops and trainings, dedicating themselves to a philanthropic "learning journey."

Their first phase was strategic but broad. They engaged an advisor based in the UK to research and evaluate local organisations in India and Africa. The successes and failures of this endeavour provided learnings that influenced how they moved forward. Funding

with deeper focus became a priority. Being diverse in their funding "didn't satisfy our own building of knowledge, or help us understand a country particularly well," Lynne says. "We didn't understand the impact we were having. We weren't making enough of a difference because our giving wasn't concentrated enough."

Both Peter and Lynne knew they wanted to fund a problem upstream, ensuring their work would catalyse systemic change over the long-term, and ripple out to wider communities and populations. They looked at a number of causes, including health, nutrition, and water. "The real catalyst was understanding that we couldn't choose between these things. They're all linked... all of these were issues for a particular population: adolescent girls," Lynne explains.

The importance of securing a local partner was also crucial. "Without a local presence, we were limited," Peter says. "Being close to the issues that girls face, and knowledgeable enough to evaluate the organisations who work with these issues, is not easily done without being on the ground."



Kiawah Trust

**FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER, AND HELPING THEM GROW**

In the search to find the right partner with a local presence that would join the Smithams in realising their vision of building an ecosystem to support girls, the family looked for an organisation in which they could truly invest. After extensive research and due diligence, they stumbled across Dasra: three people referred them to the Smithams on the same day. The chemistry was immediate. “We loved the people,” Peter says. “They are absolutely fantastic; incredibly articulate. It was like love at first sight.” Compatibility was key to what came next.

At the time, Dasra had worked with many organisations addressing issues relating to adolescent girls, but did not have a particular focus. Peter recounts telling Dasra, “this is going to be slightly unusual, but we would like you to create a team within Dasra to focus on girls. We will fund a team, and you will create a team of people who will focus specifically on girls.” A process of co-creation began, and after several months, Dasra’s first sector

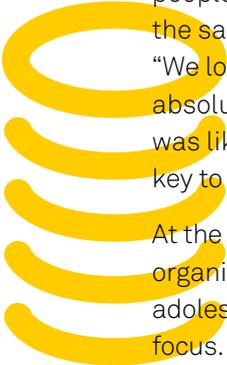
focus, backed up by a team funded entirely by Kiawah Trust, had been formed.

The Smithams’ investment - a long-term, unrestricted commitment - has delivered strong returns. After the Kiawah Trust’s initial funding, additional partners like USAID and the Piramal Foundation joined forces to launch the Dasra Girls’ Alliance. The original grant of \$2 million has leveraged over \$35 million raised for girls. Dasra is now one of the global leaders in driving effective funding for adolescent girls.

“Kiawah Trust was catalytic funding for us,” says Neera Nundy, co-founder of Dasra. “We needed this flexibility to move toward being sector-focused, where historically we had been sector-agnostic. This is natural in the growth story of most business models, but the Smithams’ involvement was a tremendous opportunity for us to take this leap and focus on adolescent girls.”

**FIND YOUR SWEET SPOT**

It is common practice that corporate donors that engage strategically in partnerships with non-profit organisations always look



Kiawah Trust



for mutual benefit: where a programme or initiative can address their own business needs as well as creating social impact. This same maxim can be applied to individuals as well, although it's usually not.

Ultimately, the Smithams thoroughly enjoy their philanthropic work, and their partnerships create benefits for them as well. "Part of what gives us a buzz is the involvement," Lynne says. "We want to be deeply involved in the organisations that we support, to understand their management challenges, get to know the team and be a genuine partner."

As individuals, they also needed to set funding priorities that addressed what they felt personally was going to have the strongest impact. "For me, it's actually sitting with the girl, hearing her tell her story about how life has changed for her," Lynne says. "Seeing the difference between who she was two years ago and who she is now; sensing it in terms of her confidence and her energy and her preparedness to speak up. It's immensely

satisfying." For Peter however, she continues, "it's seeing societal and systems change." The Kiawah Trust, through its funding and partnerships, has addressed both of these issues for the Smithams, allowing them to make significant change for girls while getting personal fulfilment out of their work.



**"THE REAL CATALYST WAS UNDERSTANDING THAT WE COULDN'T CHOOSE BETWEEN THESE THINGS. THEY'RE ALL LINKED... ALL OF THESE WERE ISSUES FOR A PARTICULAR POPULATION: ADOLESCENT GIRLS."**

**Lynne Smitham**  
Founder, Kiawah Trust

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

**1 Creating Partnerships:** While the Dasra Girls Alliance brings together a number of actors, the Smithams use the word partnership judiciously. "A partnership is a progression," Peter says. "It's about convergence around similar outcomes, processes, values, and trust. It doesn't come about easily."

**2 Understanding Context:** Once the Smithams had narrowed down their target population, they set out to learn everything they could about the context. Peter, whose professional background is in finance, reached out to contacts who had provided investment data to him in the past. He asked them to "tell us about girls: infant mortality, maternal mortality, age of first marriage, how long girls stay in school. Tell us everything you can."

**3 Investing for the Long-Term:** Recognising that Dasra needed new staff and expertise to achieve its vision of creating systemic change for girls, the Smithams committed to a five-year grant. Investing over time in capacity building is a key piece of the Smitham's giving strategy. Having the funding and freedom to build a strong team allowed Dasra the chance to fly.

**4 Capitalising on Core Skills:** Both Peter and Lynne's professional backgrounds in finance and management and coaching have allowed them to contribute their core skills to Dasra as well as financing, making the partnership richer and more rewarding for all parties.

## CASE STUDY

# WITH AND FOR GIRLS COLLECTIVE

In 2014, a group of eight foundations came together with what might seem to some as a radical notion: what if they pooled their funds to target grassroots organisations dedicated to—and led by—girls? What would happen if funding decisions were made by the girls themselves? And what if the funders provided no restrictions on how the award money could be spent?

Now in its third year, the With and For Girls Collective, comprised of donors from around

the world, has clearly demonstrated that oftentimes the best ideas come from a collective, hive mind. They have provided over \$1.3 million in flexible funding to 40 grassroots, girl-focused or girl-led organisations across 31 countries. With partners including the NoVo Foundation, Mama Cash, Stars Foundation, the Global Fund for Children, Plan International UK, EMpower, and newcomers like Comic Relief, the Collective is poised to influence how the donor community gives to girls.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONVENOR

In the Collective's start-up mode, London-based Stars Foundation took on the role of providing the staffing resources necessary to enable all the work of the Collective in its commitment. From coordination of meetings and logistics, to leading the operational side of running a global awards programme, to organizing capacity building workshops for grantees, driving forward progress on developing structures for management and governance, and recruiting new partners – Stars has kept the process flowing. The convening body keeps this momentum: “We make sure people know what they have to do, by when and why,” says Swatee Deepak, Partnerships Consultant at Stars Foundation.

Basic logistical challenges – from creating a central repository for key documents, managing the budget, understanding the complex legal requirements involved in cross-border giving to multiple countries, and even simply scheduling calls with attendees across a nine-hour time difference – are all handled by the convenor to ensure things move along.



Rachael Ouko/Stars Foundation

## A COLLECTIVE ETHOS

Effective collaboration in this sector can sometimes be extremely challenging. The perception that organisations funding and working with girls are competitive and not collaborative is rampant, and not always entirely unfounded. However, the Collective has turned that notion on its head and has been able to show that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



Mussa Uvitonze/Stars Foundation

The donor organisations have budgets that range dramatically, and fund the awards at different amounts. However, they all come to the table as equal partners, with an equal say.

Initially, the Collective accomplished this by adopting a model of consensus: all decisions needed to be unanimously approved by every member organisation. “When you’re trying to build trust and alignment among different partners, at the beginning everyone needs to discuss and agree on everything,” Deepak says, which prevents the agenda being driven by just a few of the partners. “Consensus means trust and transparency are built into the formation,” she adds.

Sandra Macías del Villar, Regional Program Director for the Americas at the Global Fund for Children, agrees that consensus has been valuable, but it comes with challenges. “In order to truly embody collaborative decision-making, we have to dedicate the time and space to make this happen,” she says. “The fact that all of its processes have been created with approval of its members, is a highlight of working with the Collective, but at the same time this has also made it challenging.” For example, the members recognise that decision-making by consensus is unsustainable with the addition of new partners, resulting in bottlenecks. Indeed, this is something they have already experienced. To adapt to their growth, they are developing a structure of decision-making that includes a formal, elected body, with quorum and reserve matters.

## **THE VALUE OF LEARNING**

The members of the Collective are in unanimous agreement about their commitment to learning, and how much they value the benefit of being able to learn from, and challenge, each other. “As an organization, Stars has learned so much: about the challenges girls face, participatory grantmaking approaches, what restricts donors from funding flexibly direct to grassroots organisations, as well as the opportunities and challenges to donor collaboration,” Deepak says.

When they first came together, the members had different definitions of what girl participation and girl leadership meant. “The discussions which led to a mutual understanding and implementation have been, and continue to be, invaluable learning for us all,” Deepak says. The Collective has a strong commitment to both. “Despite having been established by eight well-known funders, we make sure the final decisions on who we fund are made by adolescent girls around the world. They interview the shortlisted organisations, they deliberate and they choose, ensuring we begin to shift the power towards those we most want to support.”



**“DESPITE HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED BY EIGHT WELL-KNOWN FUNDERS, WE MAKE SURE THE FINAL DECISIONS ON WHO WE FUND ARE MADE BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS AROUND THE WORLD”**

**Swatee Deepak**

Partnerships Consultant at Stars Foundation

Collective members have embedded these learnings back into their organisations. Stars Foundation brought previous winners onto decision-making panels for their 2016 Impact



Awards. The Global Fund for Children has also “improved its lens on its girl-focused programming, to be more centred around girls’ participation and decision-making,” adds Macías del Villar.

### **A DIVERSITY OF VOICES**

Collective members are united in their strong belief in the model – to provide flexible funding to grassroots, girl-led and girl-focused organisations. However, their work involves a good deal of productive disagreement on issues, as they all bring their own expertise, opinions, and viewpoints to the group.

Healthy discord is highly valued by the members. “We don’t see it as a challenge – it’s crucial to learning and progressing the sector,” Deepak says. “One of the key benefits of the Collective is to be challenged by each other.”

Bringing in girls’ voices are key to this diversity. “Why is it so revolutionary to see girls as the experts on their own lives and

issues and that they should have a huge say in matters that affect them?” asks Cynthia Steele, Executive Vice President of Collective member EMpower. “Because it rarely happens. From day one, the Collective has adopted girls’ substantial contribution as a core principle and value.”



### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**1 Creating Partnerships:** The entire Collective model is an experiment in trust. Several of the members had never worked together before and were required to put their faith in the Collective process. This has resulted in strong relationships between all members and a deep sense of partnership in the group.

**2 Understanding Context:** Girls are integral to the awards decision-making process, populating panels and engaging where meaningful and relevant. The Collective members were open to learning from each other, and taking on different definitions of key contextual factors.

**3 Investing for the Long-Term:** Commitments to award winners are made for two years, with opportunities for secondary funding from Collective members and further support for capacity building. The funding for winners is by nature unrestricted; for

66% of their award winners, it was the first time they had ever received flexible funding. The Collective is now looking at how to support these groups beyond the awards period – and contribute to wider movement building.

**4 Capitalising on Core Skills:** Different Collective members contribute expertise through focused working groups, and take responsibility for sharing their expertise in different areas. Stars Foundation, for example, contributes years of experience of running a globally recognised awards programme and moving flexible funding to locally-led organisations; Frida offers the voices of young women and activists; Mama Cash contributes its strong background in funding rights-based approaches. Each partner capitalises on their own skill set, ensuring the success of the With and For Girls Collective.

CASE STUDY

# EDUCATE GIRLS

**S**afeena Husain launched Educate Girls in India in 2007 in 50 schools, bringing a unique model of authentic community ownership to enroll girls in education, keep them there and ensure that they learn well. In the past decade, the funding world has taken notice of their significant scale – they’ll be in 25,500 schools by 2018 – and their strong impact. Husain and Educate Girls have won accolades from organisations like the Skoll Foundation, USAID, WISE, L’Oreal and

more, and have taken advantage of more innovative methods of funding. Working with UBS Optimus Foundation and Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, they pioneered the first Development Impact Bond (DIB) in education to access 100% outcomes focused funding from private investors. Educate Girls offers a truly original model of working with funders across sectors to create tremendous impact for girls.

## PUTTING GIRLS AT THE FOREFRONT

While in many ways the trajectory of Educate Girls’ success has aligned with increased awareness, momentum, and general “buzz” around funding girls, the majority of donors are still attracted to the education proposition. “We have our feet in both boats – education and girls,” Husain says. “Not one of our funders is looking exclusively at funding girls. They all are education funders.”

As a result, Husain leads with the education messaging. “If I had to go out and pitch the girls’ life skills piece, it would be much more difficult (to fundraise)”, she says. However, Educate Girls works with their donors to understand the gender dimension of their work and realise that affecting change in education enrolment and retention involves a gender-sensitive approach. “Everything around girls’ education is ruled by patriarchy,” Husain says. The complexity of the issue requires funders to open their eyes to some of the gender equity pieces of work that are more challenging to measure.

## SHIFTING THE FOCUS TO LOCAL FUNDERS

Educate Girls has capitalised on the increasing awareness about the effectiveness of funding girls in unique ways. One is by building local relationships as the global profile has grown. “Two years ago, our funding was 99% international,” Husain says, “and very venture philanthropy focused.” In recent years, the organisation has transitioned to building local funding sources, estimating that now over 25% of their funds come from within India.



Educate Girls 2016



Educate Girls 2016

“There is no denying that Prime Minister Modi’s campaign ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ has created much-needed buzz around girls’ education,” Husain says. “We have seen quite a few Indian corporations rally around girls’ education, with a few new partnerships materialising after the announcement of this campaign.”

### **THE CHALLENGES OF CORPORATE PARTNERS**

With its strong value proposition, excellent track record, solid communications and charismatic director, Educate Girls has always been an easy sell to corporate donors. With partners that include heavy hitters from the financial services, the media, and beauty sectors, the organisation has been able to capitalise on increased interest in funding girls’ education. But the success has not

come without its challenges. “The servicing of corporate social responsibility money is something I have never experienced before,” Husain says. “It is really intense.” Educate Girls has had to hire several new roles just to deal with corporate partners. “We are still learning where we need to push back,” she adds, when for example, a donor has asked Educate Girls to drift from its mission.

The key to their success with corporates has been building partnerships that go beyond basic employee volunteering, the most common source of non-cash investment. “We are in really rural, tribal areas where people are not looking to migrate out to cities,” Husain says. “We’re a 3.5 hour drive from the nearest airport. Employee volunteering is not a good fit for us.”

Besides the funding needed to scale, corporate partners have provided Educate Girls with targeted pro-bono, whenever and however the organisation needs it. “We had a tech partner, Lionbridge Technologies, that helped build our mobile app,” Husain says. “In 2012, we had a great model but did not know how to scale, so we got Strategy& to create our five-year strategic roadmap. We realised that government relations was a huge risk, so we brought in APCO Worldwide, India’s best public affairs agency, to help us build a government relations department. We needed



**“THE FREEDOM OF UNRESTRICTED GIVING HAS ALLOWED US TO TAKE THE RISKS REQUIRED FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE.”**

**Safeena Husain**

Founder, Educate Girls

the right senior management team to execute our growth strategy, so we got a Swedish HR firm, Mercuri Urval, to help hire the best people.” The list of synchronous relationships is long and, in every case, a corporate partner has bridged the gaps Educate Girls needed to fill in order to scale.

### THE PERFECT FUNDER

After 10 years of exponential growth, Husain knows what the perfect funder looks like—those who fund multi-year outcome-based projects. “Any good strategic plan will be between three and five years,” she says. “You can review every year based on performance, but make that multi-year commitment. Either you believe in the plan, or you don’t.”

Being outcomes-focused is good, she says, as long as you’re “activity-agnostic. Be clear

on the success you want to fund, but let us decide what’s best to do in Bihar vs. Africa.”

Finally, the best funding, she adds, is unrestricted. “It allows us to go where the education cycle is going,” she says. “The freedom of unrestricted giving has allowed us to take the risks required for sustainable change.”



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

**1 Creating Partnerships:** Educate Girls looks for partners in its growth, and funders to be strategic with how they give. They recognise the relationship flows both ways, and requires input from both the funder and the organisation to grow. “It’s not just about cash,” Husain says. “It’s what kind of cash. If your funders are strategic, you will build a strategic project. If they are ad-hoc, you’ll have an ad-hoc partnership.”

**2 Understanding Context:** The best donors are ones who trust Educate Girls to spend their money in the most efficient way. “They are clear that they are not the experts – they simply trust us to make the smartest decisions with their funding,” Husain says. Often donors have to recognise their concerns may not be critical to achieving the desired impact. “Sometimes you can spend weeks with a donor focused on a tiny variance or random point,” she says, “that doesn’t make a difference on the ground.”

**3 Investing for the Long-Term:** Thinking about the timelines and cycles that NGOs deal with is critical to determining donors’ own timelines. For example, if secondary school is on a four-year cycle, a three-year funding partnership may not allow a partner to follow-through. Short-term or programmatic money is great, Husain says, “but there are always gaps. At each level of scale, the organisation looks very different. I can never predict where those gaps are going to be.” Longer-term funding, especially when unrestricted, helps organisations like Educate Girls fill those gaps more effectively.

**4 Capitalising on Core Skills:** Though corporate funding comes with its challenges, Educate Girls has built successful corporate partnerships by using core skills brought by companies to fill gaps within the organisation. “This is when corporate energy can actually be an enabler of impact and scale,” Husain says. “It’s about the right money and the right partnerships.”



CONCLUSION

# HOW TO FUND GIRLS EFFECTIVELY

Our case studies provide models and inspiration on how to fund girls authentically and effectively. Their motivations may have been different, and their paths varied, but they share solid principles in good funding, as well as a deep commitment to the girls they are supporting.

Reviewing the case studies, as well as our own strategic advisory in this space, we offer six key recommendations to kick-start a company, individual, or foundation's own journey to empower, educate, and catalyse girls.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

## COME TO THE TABLE AS AN EQUAL PARTNER

In traditional philanthropy, there has always been an implicit imbalance in a funding relationship where one partner is bringing the money, and the other needs it. The first step to truly creating a partnership that will benefit girls is to look at it as just that: a partnership, one with mutual benefit, where each partner has a key role to play. Camfed, a leading UK-based NGO that funds education for girls in Africa, has found success working with corporate partners on this basis. Katie

Smith, Camfed's Director of Operations, tells the story of coming to the negotiating table with one corporate partner: "We negotiate on an equal basis which is sometimes a surprise to commercial partners expecting an NGO to play a 'junior' partner role. In one case, we were negotiating for the ownership of intellectual property, and we brought along a robust legal team, which was unexpected."

Camfed is valued by their donors as a strong partner – they deliver impact, know the girls and context intimately, and provide guidance and support to help the programme achieve its overall aims. In the best relationships, the traffic of input and knowledge is not one way.

Creating a true partnership is not as easy as signing a legal document. The first step is compatibility, particularly around values, and then building a relationship. "Partnership for me is the ultimate word," Peter Smitham of the Kiawah Trust states. "If you really want to deliver impact, it has to be through partnerships, particularly for girls."

Understanding that each actor in the partnership brings value and skills, and being clear about the mutual benefit of working together, are critical pieces of the partnership journey; but creating a relationship of equals based on trust and shared values will permeate any effective donor/implementer relationship.



Abraham Perez Valdez/Stars Foundation



## RECOMMENDATION 2:

### FIND THE GAPS, THEN FUND THEM

In our 2015 report on companies funding girls' education, we created a massive, multi-coloured map detailing the barriers to education that each of 32 companies was trying to address with their investment. We found their investments were clustered around funding for developing skills, like financial literacy and technology, for secondary school girls. For the types of companies investing, such as technology and financial services firms, this may appear to make business sense. But in order to make funding for girls more effective, it must take into account the interrelated challenges that may prevent the targeted girls from even getting to secondary school in the first place.

This challenge is easy to overcome: start any investment with a full landscaping exercise that overlays the key challenges girls face with an assessment of where investment is

already focused. Being armed with knowledge about what barriers are not being addressed can help design programmes that will not only have an impact on the issues that they are specifically trying to address, but also enhance the entire ecosystem and make other, complementary investments more effective.



Educate Girls 2016

## RECOMMENDATION 3:

### KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS (AND FIND PARTNERS TO ADDRESS THEM)

Different types of donors have different needs and appetites for risk, which can sometimes make addressing the challenge of funding the gaps for girls difficult. Companies, for example, are notoriously risk-averse. Funding a girls' rights project that risks putting a partner in an oppressive government's line of fire, may harm their business, or wading into the reproductive health space may alienate some consumers. Often the most underfunded areas are underfunded for a reason: some types of donors can't fund them, or the complexities and realities may make them less attractive for companies looking for a PR boost from their investment.

Here again, a landscaping exercise is crucial to developing effective strategies for funding girls – other donor types may be investing

in the same region, perhaps even in the same girls, but have the flexibility to offer different, complementary types of funding. Understanding who else is funding in an area can provide insight into potential partnerships, where different donors could come together for collective impact.

Even individual donors sometimes wish to “go it alone,” a strategy the Smithams counsel against. “If you are a small donor or an individual, you can have complete control if you're alone,” Peter says, “but normally if you have complete control over something, it's not very large. There is always a trade-off, but collaborating is well worth the effort.”

Donors should be honest about what they will and won't invest in, and recognise that sometimes they shouldn't “go it alone”; they should investigate and research partners outside of their sector for unusual suspects doing great work.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:****DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE, THEN GIVE YOUR PARTNERS UNRESTRICTED FUNDING**

In her interview, Safeena Husain made the strong case for the benefit that unrestricted funding can have on creating systemic change for girls. This point cannot be understated. Robust due diligence – and even meeting the individuals leading the organisations – is crucial, as well as having a sense of financials, but the most effective partnerships allow the experts – those on the ground working with girls – to use funds where and when they are needed.

Investing with unrestricted income also allows organisations the option to put the money toward building their own capacity to do the work more effectively. The Smithams agree

that one of the most successful grants they ever made was roughly £100,000 for a partner to develop a fundraising strategy and recruit a senior fundraiser. As a result of this grant, the organisation's fundraising grew from £3 million to £28 million.

When making a commercial investment, investors usually do a substantial amount of due diligence, but don't direct exactly where each pound should go. Why should a philanthropic investment be any different?



Educate Girls 2016

**RECOMMENDATION 5:****INCLUDE GIRLS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

It may seem obvious, but for funders of girls' initiatives to be truly effective, they need to incorporate the voices of girls themselves.

The With and For Girls Collective works diligently to include girls throughout their award process, implementing girl-led panels that allow local girls to advise their funding decisions. "All too often in their daily lives and in broader discourse, girls are spoken of, but not listened to, or are not asked to speak," says Cynthia Steele, Executive Vice President at EMpower Foundation, a member of the Collective. "Our experience has demonstrated girls' absolute abilities to contribute significantly to decisions on giving. If girls can decide on the wise distribution of hundreds of thousands of dollars, as they

have in the past, it upends notions that girls cannot make other decisions affecting their lives or their ecosystem."

Truly effective funding will be informed by a deep understanding of girls' lives, and programmes should not just be developed and decided for girls, but by them as well.



**“OUR EXPERIENCE HAS DEMONSTRATED GIRLS’ ABSOLUTE ABILITIES TO CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO DECISIONS ON GIVING”**

**Cynthia Steele**

Executive Vice President at EMpower Foundation



**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

**BEING TRANSPARENT IS DIFFICULT, BUT CRITICAL**

Perhaps it is the old adage that it is impolite to talk too much about money, but the lack of transparency among many private sector and philanthropic actors is pervasive and harmful to the sector. The difficulties of researchers looking for data on funding girls is well documented now, but many of the actors in this space, particularly companies and individuals, are hesitant to share their data on financial flows.

Foundations have perhaps the simplest tweak to make. They are required by law in many countries to report on their grantmaking and could easily disaggregate

“WITHOUT MORE AND BETTER DATA IN THIS SPACE, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MEASURE PROGRESS OR SETBACKS IN FUNDING FOR GIRLS.”

their data for better understanding. Individuals, many private about their giving, are increasingly realising the importance of standing as an example to others about their funding by telling their stories in more public forums and among their peers.



Marcia Chandrasekaran Foundation

Companies have likely the furthest road to travel. Corporate transparency is an issue across the board, although significant strides have been made. Sharing real data on the investment companies are making in girls and the impact that investment has, is critical to inspiring others to take meaningful action. Recognising failures is difficult but also crucial. What's measured, matters: without more and better data in this space, it will not be possible to measure progress or setbacks in funding for girls.

**THE FUTURE: MOVING BEYOND WHY GIRLS**

A decade ago, girl-focused funders and organisations were constantly being asked “why girls?” Throughout this research, that question never arose; in fact, when directly asked this, the interview subjects claimed again and again that their donors or partners rarely asked that question any more.

This represents a shift in the right direction: a recognition that funding girls doesn't just benefit girls, but benefits everyone. As funders increase their commitments towards girls, we hope to see collaborative, informed, inclusive approaches that can unleash the true potential girls have to offer the world.





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# INSIGHTS

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# THANK YOU

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