



Purposeful's Theory of Change



Our Grounding Truths

To be a girl is to live on the frontline of injustice
To be a girl is to resist
Girls and their feminist allies have been organising and collectivising for millennia



Our Mission is to ensure that

Girl activists and their allies have access to the resources, networks and platforms they need to power their activism and remake the world for themselves



We will do this through our Power Building Strategies

- Redistributing Power Assets: Resourcing Girls Resistance
- Building Collective Power: Building a Base, Raising Consciousness & Nurturing Solidarity
- Organising Power Holders: Influencing & Coalition Building
- Transforming Power Structures: Political Advocacy & Agenda Setting



In all that we do, we will be guided by the following Values

- Joy as Resistance
- Cultivating Radical Imagination
- Deep Embodiment
- Rooted in Sisterhood & Solidarity
- Power in Diversity
- Centering Lived Experience
- Taking Bold Action
- Many of Ways of Knowing



We will begin to see the following shifts happening:

- Girls have access to resources, assets & services
- A healthy ecosystem of more & better funding for girl activists and their allies
- Partnerships between feminist allies are formed
- Girls have awareness of their rights & their power



Solidarity & collective action amongst girls



Power is balancing
Girls influence key decisions which affect their lives
Rules, policies, laws shift in favour of girls rights

A strong Movement with and for girls is forming and sustained

Violence & other harmful practices against girls are retreating
Value systems that position girls as 'subordinate' are dismantled



Power is shifting in systems & structures



Cultural expectations & conversations change

Increased visibility of & discussion on issues negatively affecting girls
The negative dominant narratives & beliefs about girls begin to shift
Increased public support for girls rights



Patriarchal manifestations are eliminated

When this happens we see...

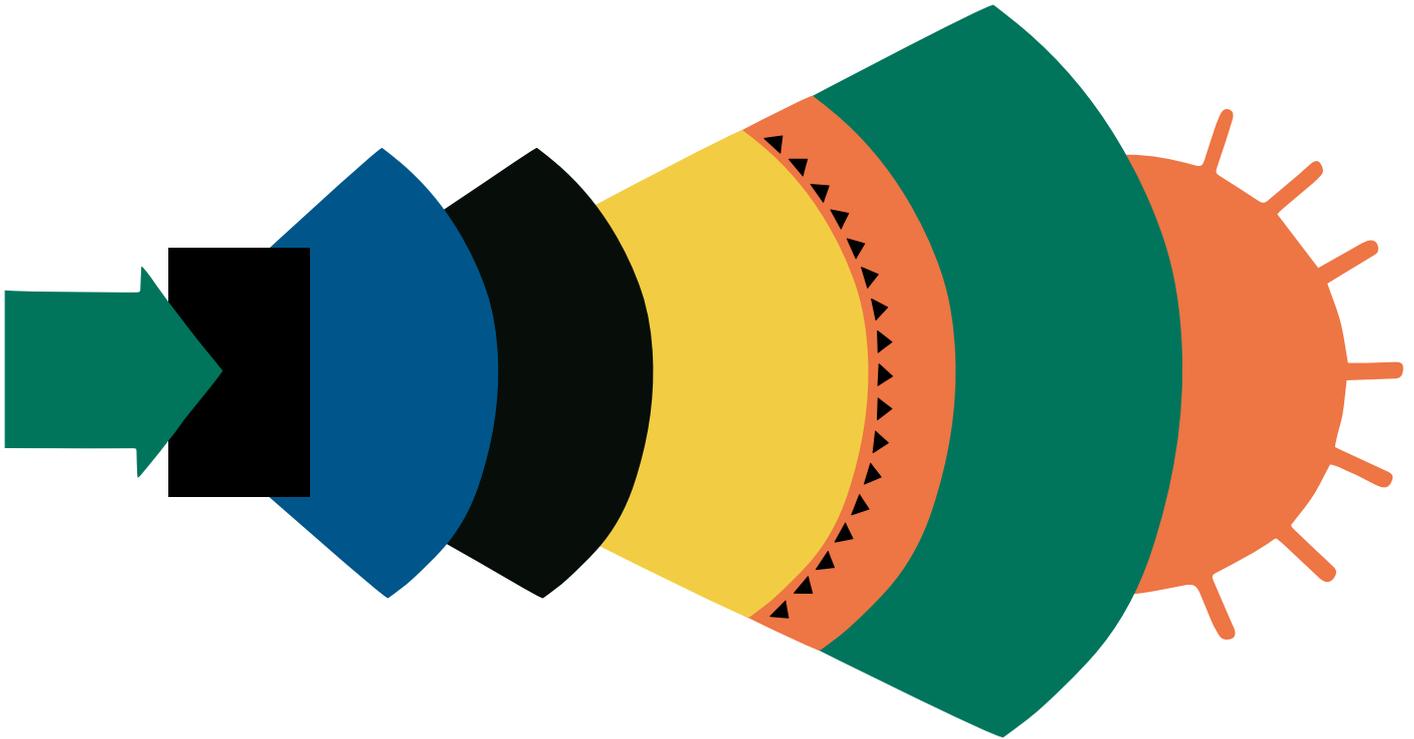


We believe that all of this will lead to the realisation of our Vision:

Girls are living in safety, dignity and freedom!
And through it all the world is transformed!

We believe that when we support girls and their allies in movements and collectives with the resources, networks and platforms they need to power their activism, we begin to see cultural conversations shifting, harmful practices eroding, power balancing and systems of oppression cracking. These changes are necessary so that girls live in safety, dignity and freedom. And through it all, the world is transformed.

How We Understand Change



Our Theory of Change captures our understanding of change and how we seek to spark, catalyse, contribute to and sustain change. It is based on the understanding that change is not linear and instead complex, that it cannot always be neatly categorised into separate boxes but that it is very often layered and interconnected.

The Theory of Change is informed by the Gender@Work framework¹. We also draw on movement building theory which centres collective action as the most critical avenue to initiate change.

Finally, this Theory of Change is rooted in the understanding that power is at the heart of the injustices, inequalities, discrimination, exclusion and violence which we seek to eliminate in order for girls to live in safety, dignity and freedom. Therefore, we seek to shift existing power dynamics in order to transform the world with and for girls.²

We seek to address the interlocking forces of patriarchy, imperialism and white supremacy, and the many ways in which they manifest in girls' lives: from the lack of access to opportunities, regressive legislation to specific practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of violence and discrimination girls face.

Our vision is that: Girls are living in safety, dignity and freedom and the world is transformed!

This vision emerged directly from our exploration of the question “what does the remade world we want to build with and for girls look and feel like for girls?” We used our collective learning from working with and for girls, girls and young women’s insights, as well as learning from peers and partners across the feminist movement to inform our vision as well as the overall theory of change.

¹ Gender@Work framework

² For more on Power see Batliwala, S. *All about Power: Understanding Social Power & Power Structures*.

Our Grounding Truths



Contextualising our theory of change

While we know girls face extreme vulnerabilities at the intersections of **age and gender**, we also know that they are immensely powerful.

For millennia girls have been organising and agitating at the intersections of multiple movements for justice, from Africa's anti-colonial movements to the Arab spring, climate justice organising and everything in between, girls have always sparked and sustained transformational change.



To be a girl is to live on the frontline of injustice

For most girls, being both young and female places them at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. While the specifics vary by geography the overall picture is the same: individual and collective potential is unrealized while systemic cycles of inequality persist.

At the root of all of this are the intersecting forces of domination, exploitation and patriarchy, the global system of white male supremacy that keeps power situated in the hands of men by aiming to control the minds and bodies of women and girls. Sometimes this control is exercised in obvious ways - the reality, or fear, of sexual violence or the all-consuming impact of anti-black, racist structural institutions. And sometimes it is more subtle, woven into the fabric of social, cultural and economic life - diffuse, obscured, but omnipresent.

Entrenched systems of patriarchy, exploitation and domination mean that all girls and all women are deeply vulnerable to violence and discrimination. **Race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, ability, age and other factors work together to deepen exclusion and harm even further.**

Adolescent girls - young, poor, black, rural and so on - are battling the compound effects of multiple forms of structural inequality, and it is therefore no surprise that they are also the girls who are most hidden and whose voices are most silenced. Although the multiple forms of oppression they face should rightly see them front and centre of donor priorities and policy agendas, they are most likely to be shut out or forgotten.

This is how patriarchy exerts its control over girls even through the very structures that are meant to act as forces for 'development' and 'progress'.

To be a girl is to resist

In every village, in every corner of the globe, girls are gathering, reimagining, pushing back to create better worlds for themselves and us all.

The forces of oppression exert themselves on girls' minds and bodies in profoundly violent ways - sometimes obvious, often diffuse, obscured but omnipresent.

And yet girls find ways around and over and through and under - they run, they stay, they build, they birth. They survive. And they don't survive. And most days they can be found - hidden in corners and out in plain sight - whispering with another girl, strategizing with other girls, sustaining because of another girl.

And in every place, across every epoch, they have been supported by women, old and young alike; women who in silent deeds and in loud action hold and heal and raise up and radicalise a new generation of girls.

We know this to be true because we are those girls, we are those women and we are their allies, and everywhere we have been and everywhere we have known the same is true.

Girls & their feminist allies have been organising and collectivising with and for girls for millennia

While we centre girls in all our work we know we cannot separate them from the critical community of feminist allies who have always stood beside and behind - politicising, holding and healing girls as they enter collective space and do the work of justice. **The movement for girls is intergenerational.**

These compounding truths help us to situate this work in the context of broader justice struggles, and to understand the precise nature of our role within girl-led change processes.

Our Mission & Power Building Strategies



Our Mission is to ensure that:
Girl activists and their allies have access to the resources, networks and platforms they need to power their activism and remake the world for themselves.

We will do this through Our Power Building Strategies
Centering the political power of girl activists, we enter all of our work through a power-building lens - redistributing power assets, building collective power, organising power holders and transforming power structures.

Redistributing Power Assets: Resourcing Girls Resistance

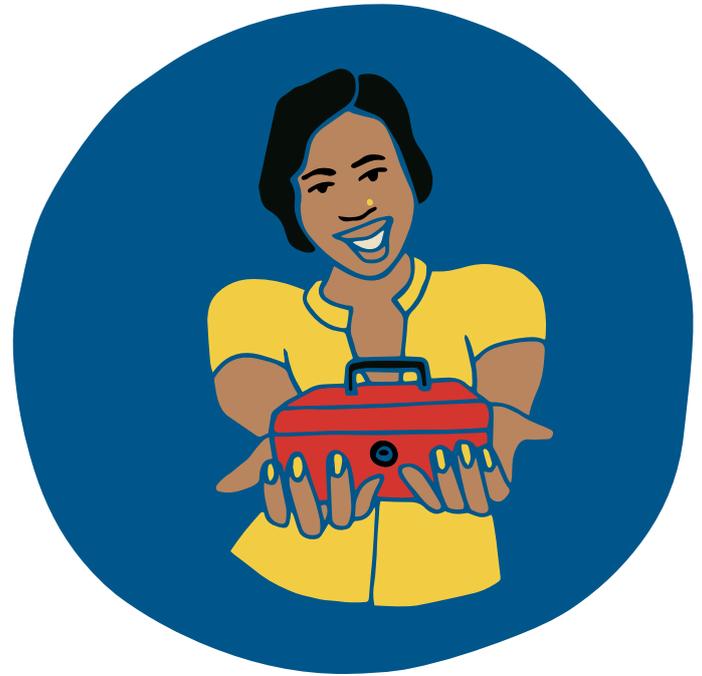
Grounded in feminist principles of solidarity and reciprocity, we are reimagining what it means to hold movement resources in deep relationship and with deep accountability to girls.

We do this through our **With and For Girls (WFG) Fund**, the world's first Africa-rooted global fund for girls organising and activism.

We also work to support young feminist organising during emergencies, crises and at catalytic movement moments.

The Global Resilience Fund for Girls and Young Women is just one example of the ways in which we shift resources and power to young feminist groups at critical moments.

Working across multiple levels - through global funding windows to deeply rooted community re-granting mechanisms - we reframe grant-making practice so girls can define and determine resource distribution in the service of their own visions, goals and dreams of freedom.



Building Collective Power: Building a Base, Raising Consciousness & Nurturing Solidarity

Grounded in movement theory - and deeply inspired by Black liberation and anti-imperialist movements on the African continent and beyond - we hold space for girls to come together, learn together, to ask why, to push back and to transcend.

In Sierra Leone, we work with tens of thousands of girls across the country to build intergenerational solidarity and access spaces of political knowledge building. We mobilise girls and their allies at scale, modelling new beliefs and shifting cultural conversations in community at large.

Across the world - primarily through the WFG Fund partnerships and accompaniment processes - we support transnational solidarity building, facilitate peer-learning and collective strategy creation, and hold liberatory learning space for and by girls.



Organising Power Holders: Influencing & Coalition Building

We advocate for more and better resources, policies and programmatic practices with and for girls across local, national and global decision making spaces.

We leverage learnings from our own practice to support others to move from *protectionist* to *power-building* approaches to supporting girls.

Working in partnership with civil society, development and philanthropic communities we hold learning space, convene practitioners, build national coalitions and co-create a collective advocacy voice.

Across all that we do, we work to visibilize girls political power so that their organising and activism is resourced in healthy and sustainable ways for the long term.



Transforming Power Structures: Political Advocacy & Agenda Setting

We work in deep partnership with girls to hold power-hoarders to account.

We accompany girls as they work to transform imperialist and patriarchal systems of oppression, showing up and holding space as adult allies in the service of girls' own goals and strategies.

Our advocacy takes different forms in different places, for example working with girls to lobby for change in their communities, co-creating new policy provisions with local authorities in West Africa, or holding governments to account through formal legal systems.

Shifts

We believe that carrying out the strategies above (guided by our values), will contribute to the following shifts happening. They capture both the process of change we envision as well as specific desired changes we seek.

Girls have access to resources, assets & services

Through the work of girls, their allies and Purposeful, girls have access to the resources, assets and services which enhance their current realities as well as possibilities. For those already organising this would also mean increased access to the financial resources needed to support their initiatives/actions.



A healthy ecosystem of more & better funding for girl activists and their allies

In recognition that there are limited resources for girl activists and their allies, and the funding that does exist often inhibits rather than supports their activism - Purposeful seeks to contribute to creating and sustaining a healthy funding ecosystem for girl activists and their allies.

It is critical that power in philanthropy is shifted in order to ensure that organisations truly centre girls in their work, engage with girls from a power building frame and provide more and better funding to girls and their allies.

As an emerging organisation, it is critical that Purposeful itself has sufficient resources to innovate, mobilise, educate, execute and collaborate for girls; modelling what more and better funding for girls looks like.



Partnerships between intergenerational Feminist allies are formed

Increased connection and partnerships between intergenerational feminist allies enables the sharing of ideas/ knowledge and collaborative action.

Most significantly these partnerships support allies to **build a collective agenda** which is critical to forming, strengthening and sustaining a strong movement around girls and catalysing systemic level change.



Girls have awareness of their rights & their power

The politicisation or raised political consciousness of girls is one of the key shifts.

Girls increased awareness of their rights and possibilities is a critical step towards their **strengthened ability to analyse, question and challenge the systems of power that are holding them down.**

Girls ability to do so, directly contributes to solidarity and collective action amongst girls and thus the formation of a strong movement for girls that includes girls.

All of the shifts above contribute to:



Solidarity & Collective action amongst girls

As girls experience the power of connection, and form friendships and solidarity with one another, and have access to the resources, networks and platforms to power their activism, they start to **organise, mobilise and increase collective action**; organising “small” and “big” acts of resistance in formal and informal collectives.

As girls build and nurture their collective power, they build momentum and more girls start to be actively engaged in their own liberation.

Through
all of these
shifts...

A strong Movement with and for girls is forming and sustained.

Our Theory of Change is largely informed by movement theory. The shifts described above all contribute towards forming, strengthening and sustaining a movement around girls in order to secure girls rights, and transform the systems, institutions and structures that oppress them as well as challenge the narratives and ideologies that justify their oppression.

When this happens we see...

Changes



Cultural expectations and conversations change

Narratives influence thought, feelings, attitudes and practices. They are a form of invisible power but often have very tangible and long term negative effects given that expectations and thoughts they generate often translate into how girls are treated in their communities and homes.

Changing the dominant narrative on girls serves both to ensure that girls do not live in contexts where their dignity, freedom and safety are jeopardised and ensures that girls do not continue to internalise limiting beliefs.

The work we do with allies and girls directly challenges the dominant harmful cultural expectations and conversations on girls, **creating a new narrative from a feminist perspective.**

These new narratives, shifts in cultural expectations and conversations lay a foundation for eliminating harmful practices and changing systems and structures.



Patriarchal manifestations are eliminated

As the movement around girls challenges the value system that positions girls as 'subordinate' members of society, the practices rooted in patriarchy such as the violence against women and girls, including child marriage and FGM, are eliminated.

This change in consciousness - sparked by changing narratives - leads to the increased support for girls and women's rights and a gradual elimination of harmful and exclusionary norms and practices.





Power is shifting in systems & structures

Transforming the formal institutions, structures and systems which oppress girls is vital; to ensure that that they do not perpetuate power imbalances but rather serve and support girls and their rights.

This will be evident through the introduction of or changes to (& enforcement of) rules, policies or laws to reflect the insights and recommendations provided by girls and their allies; for example- laws which seek to formalise changes in practices such as anti-FGM legislation to those which seek to redress the marginalisation of girls such as the over-turning of the pregnant school girls ban.



Vision



It is our belief that these changes will lead to the realisation of our vision:

Girls are living in safety, dignity, and freedom! And through it all the world is transformed!