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An exploration of the landscape of Young Feminist Organizing/ Organizations (YFO) in Kenya & Mexico

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANIZING/ ORGANIZATIONS (YFO) IN

KENYA & MEXICO

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
CBO	Community-based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FAP	Feminist Advisory Panel
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IYF	Individual Young Feminist
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
YFO	Young Feminist Organizing/Organization

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4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last 10 years, numerous youth-led initiatives have emerged globally to address local development and social challenges. These initiatives focus on issues such as gender inequalities, women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence (GBV), access to safe abortion, girls' education, climate justice, and other social problems.

The Population Council-Kenya and the Population Council-Mexico joined forces with young feminist organizations (YFOs), feminist academics, and other stakeholders to conduct participatory evaluation research (PAR). This research aimed to better understand the YFO landscape in Kenya and Mexico, including organization, operations, challenges, and shared experiences. The study provides an overview of youth-led feminist organizations in Kenya and Mexico, covering various aspects such as demographic and background characteristics, key focus areas, methods of communication and collaboration, legal status, funding, and target populations, which refers to the group programs, interventions, or actions they are intended to serve.

As part of a broader PAR, we conducted a cross-sectional exploratory study using snowball sampling, which began with study participants from the YFO mapping exercise and our own networks and then continued on the basis of participant referrals. Respondents from Kenya and Mexico completed an online survey from July to September 2023. The survey covered demographic and background characteristics, organization structure, thematic focus areas, funding, collaboration, barriers, and challenges. We collected data using an ODK-based web-link platform in Kenya and SurveyMonkey in Mexico. After obtaining the data in “CSV” format, we cleaned the databases separately and analyzed various key outcomes of interest, comparing results between Kenya and Mexico. We focused the final analysis in Kenya on individuals aged 18–35 years, and in Mexico on individuals aged 18–32, as defined as “young” by the FAP. We used descriptive analysis to summarize and describe the main findings.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

- In Kenya, 157 individuals completed the survey, whereas in Mexico complete data were collected from 69 participants. The online survey in Kenya and Mexico had almost equal participation rates among younger (18–24 years) and older (25–35 years) age groups. In Mexico, a slightly higher proportion of older respondents participated. The average age of the participants in both countries was around 25 years.
- In Kenya and Mexico, younger respondents were more likely to identify as individual young feminists, while older respondents were more likely to be part of a civil society organization/community-based organization/nongovernmental organization (CSO/CBO/NGO). This suggests that individuals may first engage with feminism at a personal level and then later become part of a formal organization such as a CSO/CBO/NGO.
- Based on the data, nearly half of the survey respondents in Kenya and Mexico had participated in feminist movements for one to five years. However, in Kenya, none of the respondents aged 18–24 had been part of the feminist movement for more than five years, unlike in Mexico, where 6 out of 28 had (21.4%). The survey results also show that 23.5% of respondents in Kenya had been in the feminist movement for up to one year, compared to 11.3% in Mexico. In both countries, respondents between the ages of 25 and 35 made up the larger proportion of those involved in feminist spaces for more than five years. These findings indicate a potential generational shift, suggesting that a growing number of younger people in Kenya are more inclined to question and challenge traditional gender norms and power structures. This shift in mindset may have created an environment where young people feel empowered to embrace feminist ideologies and advocate for change.
- Young feminists in Kenya and Mexico are involved in similar thematic areas such as gender equity, human rights, and the environment. Older feminists may dominate leadership positions in these areas because of their experience and established networks, whereas younger feminists appear to be much more diversified and cover a wide range of emerging issues and themes. It is important for the feminist movement to promote collaboration across generations to strengthen its impact and relevance by enhancing capacity building, but also to promote intergenerational communication to bridge differences within the feminist movement to ensure that the voices of younger YFOs are heard at higher levels. Young feminists in Kenya and Mexico work with quite similar populations, but with a few differences. Both countries focus on adolescent girls and young women, adult women, teenage mothers, and girls and boys. In Mexico,

- 6 the Indigenous communities, “searching mothers,”¹ and Afro-Mexican communities are also populations served by YFOs. Persons with disabilities are a unique target group not mentioned in Mexico. Young feminists in both countries may focus on similar groups or issues due to global feminist solidarity, an intersectional approach, influence from transnational feminist networks, common colonial and post-colonial experiences, global development agendas and frameworks, and shared socioeconomic and environmental challenges.
- In Kenya, YFOs utilized the following advocacy tactics/strategies: in-person advocacy, digital/online advocacy, and project implementation. Data show that older age groups use these strategies more frequently.
 - In the survey, 86.1% of Kenyan YFO respondents reported having some form of legal registration, compared to 24.6% in Mexico. In Kenya, younger respondents were less likely to be part of registered organizations. In Mexico, legal registration did not seem to depend on age. The feminist movement in Mexico has evolved with new forms of organizing that do not require legal registration, challenging traditional ways of organizing.
 - In the year preceding the interviews, less than half of the young feminist organizations in Kenya (41.2%) and around a quarter in Mexico (24.6%) received funding. Most of the funding in both countries came from outside the country. Young feminists in Kenya rely more on these external funding sources than those in Mexico, possibly due to limited local funding opportunities and a greater willingness from donors to support women’s empowerment initiatives in Kenya. A balanced approach combining external and local funding sources can help create a more sustainable feminist movement in Kenya.
 - Respondents in Kenya and Mexico implement activities at subnational and national levels. In Kenya, activities mainly occur at county and subcounty levels, while in Mexico they take place at community, state, and municipal levels. A significant number of individuals aged 25–35 are involved in these activities in both countries. In Kenya, younger respondents (18–24 years) focus on regional and national levels, and older age groups dominate subnational activities.
 - Communication and collaboration with other activists is crucial for young feminists in Kenya and Mexico. It helps build solidarity, amplify voices, address challenges, share resources, foster cross-cultural understanding, and advance the goal of creating more just and equitable societies.
 - The main barriers inhibiting the young feminist movement in Kenya and Mexico are similar. Respondents from both countries have identified funding, stigmatization, and a lack of supportive environments as primary obstacles. Other challenges include insecurity, lack of data, and male-oriented media coverage. Despite cultural and geographic differences, the young feminist movements in these countries face similar barriers. Acknowledging their shared experiences can promote knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

1 Although the term “searching mothers” (*madres buscadoras*) refers to mothers searching for missing children, it also includes wives, sisters, and daughters who have disappeared.

BACKGROUND

The last few decades have seen the rise of many initiatives led by young people worldwide that aim to tackle local development and social issues. These initiatives have focused on a wide range of issues, including gender inequality, women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence (GBV), access to safe abortion, girls' education, and climate justice among others (Neway.net 2011; FRIDA 2015; Global Fund for Women 2021; UN WOMEN 2011; UN WOMEN 2021) . Despite the growth of youth-led initiatives across Africa and Latin America, there is still a level of suspicion surrounding feminism due to misconceptions and the association between feminism and radical views (Horton 2015; García-Contreras 2020; Cerva-Cerna 2021; González and Yebra 2023; Oyoo 2023).

The Population Council-Kenya and Population Council-Mexico collaborated with young feminist organizations (YFOs), feminist academics, and other stakeholders to conduct participatory evaluation research (PAR). The primary objective of the present study is to better understand the YFO landscape in Kenya and Mexico, including how the YFOs organize and operate. Findings from the study will enable a better understanding of the contexts of YFOs within and between these two settings, including their challenges and the intersectionality of their experiences. This is expected to foster global solidarity and collaboration and amplify the voices and experiences of YFOs to create meaningful change. Furthermore, this research aims to gain preliminary insights into the concepts of the impact and strength of feminist organizing, which will be explored in a subsequent research activity. It will also identify other areas that have been overlooked in research. By doing so, policymakers, donors, other stakeholders, and the community can better understand, engage in, and support YFOs.

This study describes the landscape of youth-led feminist organizations in Kenya and Mexico. It covers various aspects such as demographic and background characteristics, YFO key focus areas, communication and collaboration, legal status, operational areas, funding, membership in local and international organizations, YFO actor types, target populations, and barriers and challenges. This report defines YFOs as individual activists, collectives, informal groups, and registered organizations led by young women, trans women, or nonbinary persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

METHODS

As part of a broader PAR project, we conducted a cross-sectional exploratory study that collected quantitative data. We used a snowball sampling approach where respondents completed an

online survey from July to September 2023 in Mexico, and from June to July 2023 in Kenya. The study began with participants identified from an initial YFO mapping exercise and then continued on the basis of referrals from those participants (we chose this technique to harness the power of participants' and research teams' social networking and personal connections while engaging with young feminists and YFOs²).

To distribute the survey in Kenya and Mexico, we shared the web link through email, social media (Facebook and Instagram), and a QR WhatsApp code. We also reached out to YFO networks after receiving a referral from the FAP, a diverse group of young feminists from Kenya and Mexico who were chosen to guide the study. Additionally, we obtained other YFO contacts from the YFO directory that we developed in the earlier stages of the project (i.e., mapping of YFO activities), and we identified YFOs through referrals from other YFOs.

The research teams in Kenya and Mexico designed the questionnaire and shared it with the FAP for review and approval. Although the final survey was adapted to meet the requirements and needs of the local contexts in both countries, the survey instrument was designed to provide information on the project's guiding questions: What does the landscape of YFO look like in Kenya and Mexico, and what are the barriers and challenges that YFOs face in those countries? The questionnaire covered demographic and background characteristics, information on organization structure, thematic focus areas, funding, collaboration with other stakeholders, barriers and challenges, and interest in further engagement. In Mexico, we administered the survey using SurveyMonkey, whereas in Kenya, we administered the survey using an ODK-based web-link platform. Informed consent was obtained from participants before the survey was opened.

We obtained the databases for Kenya and Mexico directly from SurveyMonkey and ODK. After importing it to StataMP 16, we cleaned and prepared the databases separately. We did not merge them into a single database for two reasons. First, the data-collection strategies were different in Kenya and Mexico. Data collection in Kenya was done through the ODK platform, which follows specific structural rules for variables and data export. In Mexico, data collection occurred via an online platform (SurveyMonkey), which is not bound by those rules. Second, additional country-specific questions were included in the survey for Kenya and Mexico to capture situations in which YFOs work in each country, as suggested by the FAP³. However, most variables in both databases were relabeled using the same labels. When necessary, we also created new variables and categories, such as age groups.

After consulting with the FAP, we decided to focus the final analysis in Kenya on individuals aged 18-35 years and on individuals aged 18-32 years in Mexico, as these age ranges are defined as “young” by the FAP. We conducted a descriptive analysis to present categorical variables by their frequency (N) and relative percentages, while continuous variables were presented by their mean. We analyzed various key outcomes of interest, including the type of feminist actor, key focus areas, target populations, funding, tactics, leadership structures, barriers and challenges, communication and collaboration, and others, by the age of YFOs.

2. The following issues surface in the literature pertaining to snowball sampling: selection bias as participants were not randomly drawn but are dependent on subjective choices, diversity of subjects as the sample is limited to existing networks, and validity (Woodley and Lockard 2016).
3. In Mexico, the FAP suggested omitting the question on the leadership structure of the YFOs given that youth-led movements have fewer management levels, with responsibilities and decision-making shared among all members. In Kenya, the FAP suggested omitting the question on YFOs' impact on policies, actions, and programs at the community, local, national, and international levels because the qualitative and subjective nature of the responses makes them difficult to quantify.

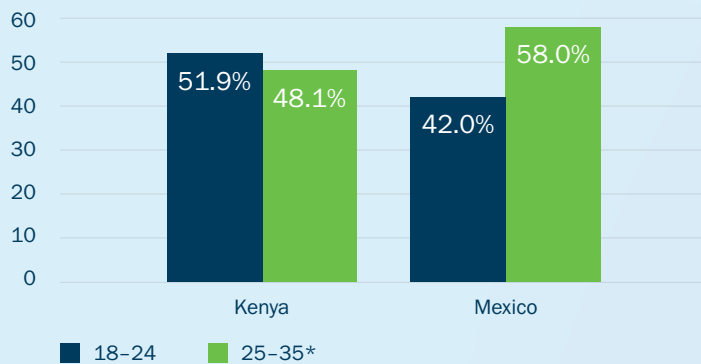
10 KEY FINDINGS

Demographics: Of the 184 individuals who accessed the survey link in Mexico, 72 (39%) completed the survey. Among those who completed the survey, 69 identified themselves as women, 1 as a man, and 2 as nonbinary. All the respondents were aged between 18 and 32.

The survey, which was conducted in Kenya, reached 159 participants, with data collected from 157 respondents. Among them, 137 identified themselves as women, 13 as men, 7 as nonbinary/nonconforming, and 3 did not provide any information, resulting in missing values. The respondents' age range was between 19 and 54. However, the analysis excluded 7 women aged 36–49 and 1 woman over 50 in Kenya, hence their responses were not included in the final analysis.

Figure 1 displays the breakdown of survey participants from Kenya and Mexico by age group (18–24 and 25–35 years). In Kenya, there was an almost equal number of younger (18–24 years) and older (25–35 years) participants (51.9% vs. 48.1%). However, in Mexico, there were more older respondents (25–35 years) than younger ones (18–24 years) (58.0% vs. 42.0%). The average age of participants in both countries was nearly similar at 25.6 years (Kenya) and 25.8 years (Mexico).

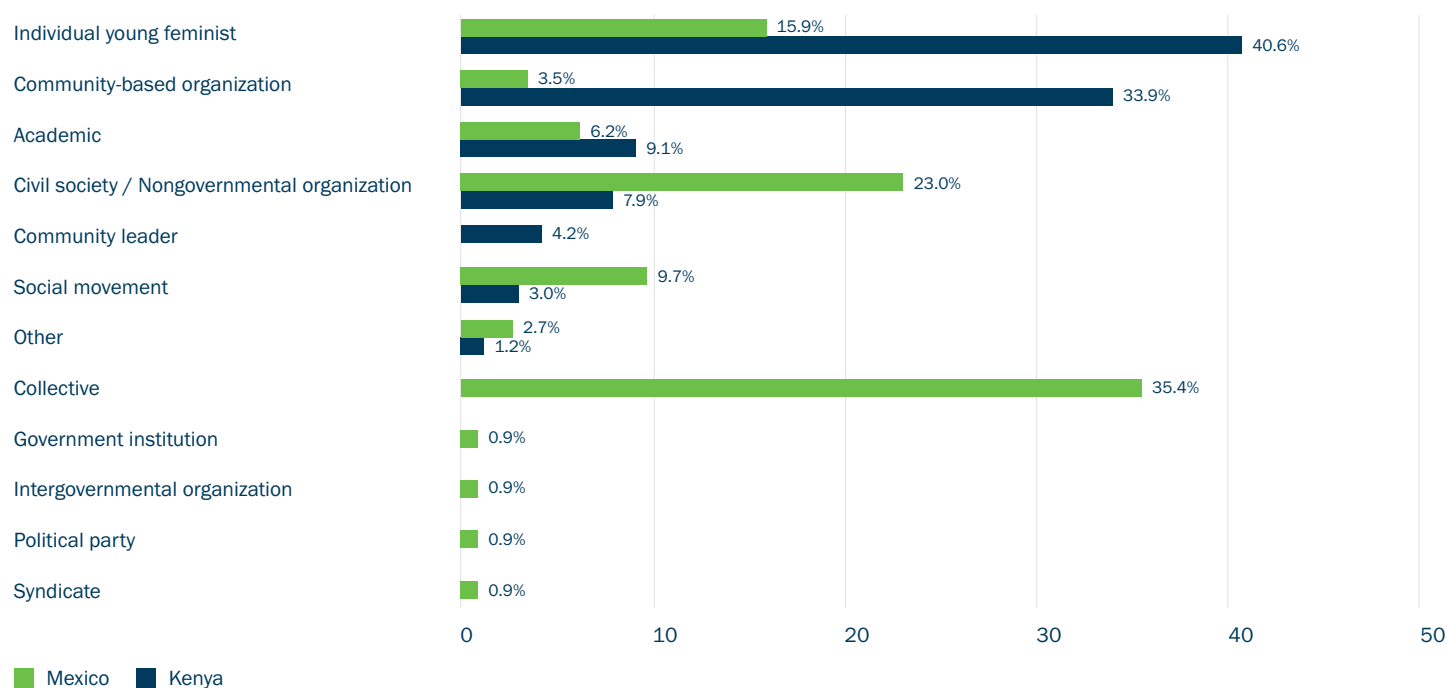
Figure 1: Age-range distribution by percentage of respondents in Kenya and Mexico



Note: In Kenya, the survey was administered to individuals aged 18-35, while in Mexico it was administered to individuals aged 18-32.

Types of young feminist actors: Figure 2 summarizes the types of young feminist actors in Kenya and Mexico. In Kenya, the majority of respondents identified themselves as individual young feminists (IYF) (40.6%), followed by community-based organizations (CBO) (33.9%), academics (9.1%), and civil society organizations (CSOs) or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (7.9%). Meanwhile, in Mexico, the respondents mainly identified themselves as collectives (35.4%), followed by CSOs/NGOs (23%), IYF (15.9%), and social movements (9.7%). The analysis revealed that in both countries younger respondents aged 18–24 years old tended to identify as individual young feminists (Kenya at 61.2% and Mexico at 66.7%), while older respondents aged 25–35 years old identified or were part of CSOs/NGOs (Kenya at 53.8% and Mexico at 57.7%). Note that participants in Kenya and Mexico could select more than one option: in Kenya, some IYFs identified as CBOs or academics, whereas in Mexico, many IYFs selected collectives.

Figure 2: Types of young feminist actors in Kenya and Mexico



Note: The question allowed multiple responses.

Duration of engagement in the feminist movement: Table 1 displays the breakdown of survey respondents based on their duration of participation in the young feminist movement or space. Roughly half of the participants from Kenya and Mexico (50.6% and 53.6%, respectively) reported being involved in the feminist space for 1–5 years. On the other hand, a slightly higher percentage of respondents from Mexico than Kenya stated that they had been part of the feminist movement for 5 years or more (34.8% vs. 25.9%). In Kenya, twice as many participants as in Mexico reported being in the feminist movement for 0–1 year (23.5% vs 11.6%). In Kenya, most respondents aged 18–24 had been involved in the feminist movement for 0–1 years (45.7%) and 1–5 years (54.2%), with none reporting being in the feminist space for more than 5 years. Most respondents who participated in the feminist movement for 0–1 year in Kenya were aged 18–24 (80%, n=16/20). In Mexico, 20.7% of respondents aged 18–24 had been part of the feminist space for over 5 years, 62.1% reported being in the feminist movement for 1–5 years, and 17.2% for 0–1 year. In Kenya and Mexico, the larger proportion of those involved in the feminist space for more than 5 years were aged 25–35.

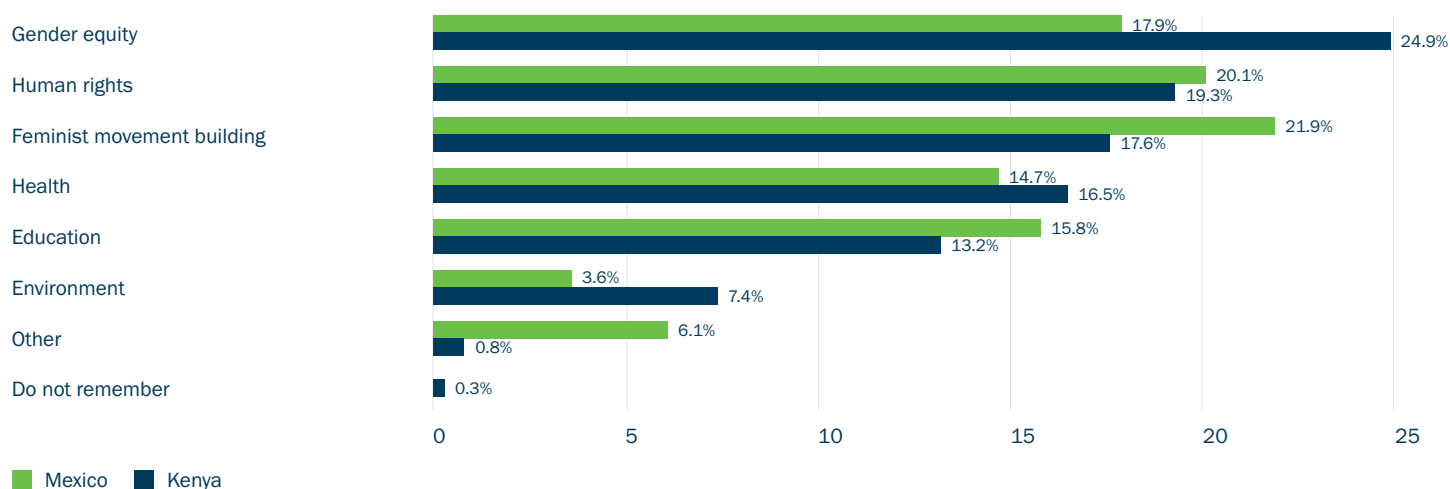
12 Table 1: Duration of working/engaging in the feminist movement in Kenya and Mexico

	Kenya		Mexico	
	N	%	N	%
0–1 year	20	23.5	8	11.6
1–5 years	43	50.6	37	53.6
5 or more years	22	25.9	24	34.8
Total	85*	100	69	100

*Note: There were 47 missing values for Kenya, likely due to nonresponse to the question.

Key thematic areas of focus for young feminists: Based on the data presented in Figure 3, respondents from Kenya and Mexico were actively participating in various advocacy sectors. In Kenya, young feminists were primarily involved in three focus areas, namely gender equity (24.9%), human rights (19.3%), and feminist movement building (17.6%). Other sectors with significant involvement include health (16.5%), education (13.2%), and environment (7.4%). On the other hand, respondents from Mexico were primarily involved in feminist movement building (21.9%), human rights (20.1%), and gender equity (17.9%). Education (15.8%) and health (14.7%) were the other two sectors with significant involvement. Interestingly, Mexico’s respondents were less involved in environment-related sectors than Kenya (7.4% vs. 3.6%). Compared to the youngest age group (18–24 years), in both Kenya and Mexico the oldest YFOs (25–35 years) constituted the largest proportions across all thematic areas. However, the data also revealed that in Kenya, the older age group (25–35 years) dominated the top three sectors, i.e., gender equity (55.1% vs. 44.9%), human rights (59.2% vs. 40.8%), and feminist movement building (42% vs. 62.5%). Similarly, in Mexico, the older age group was predominantly involved in health (58% vs. 42%), human rights (58.9% vs. 41.1%), and feminist movement building (57.4% vs. 42.6%). These patterns suggest that younger participants tend to diversify thematic areas and broaden their agendas, while older feminists may constrain their work to specific themes.

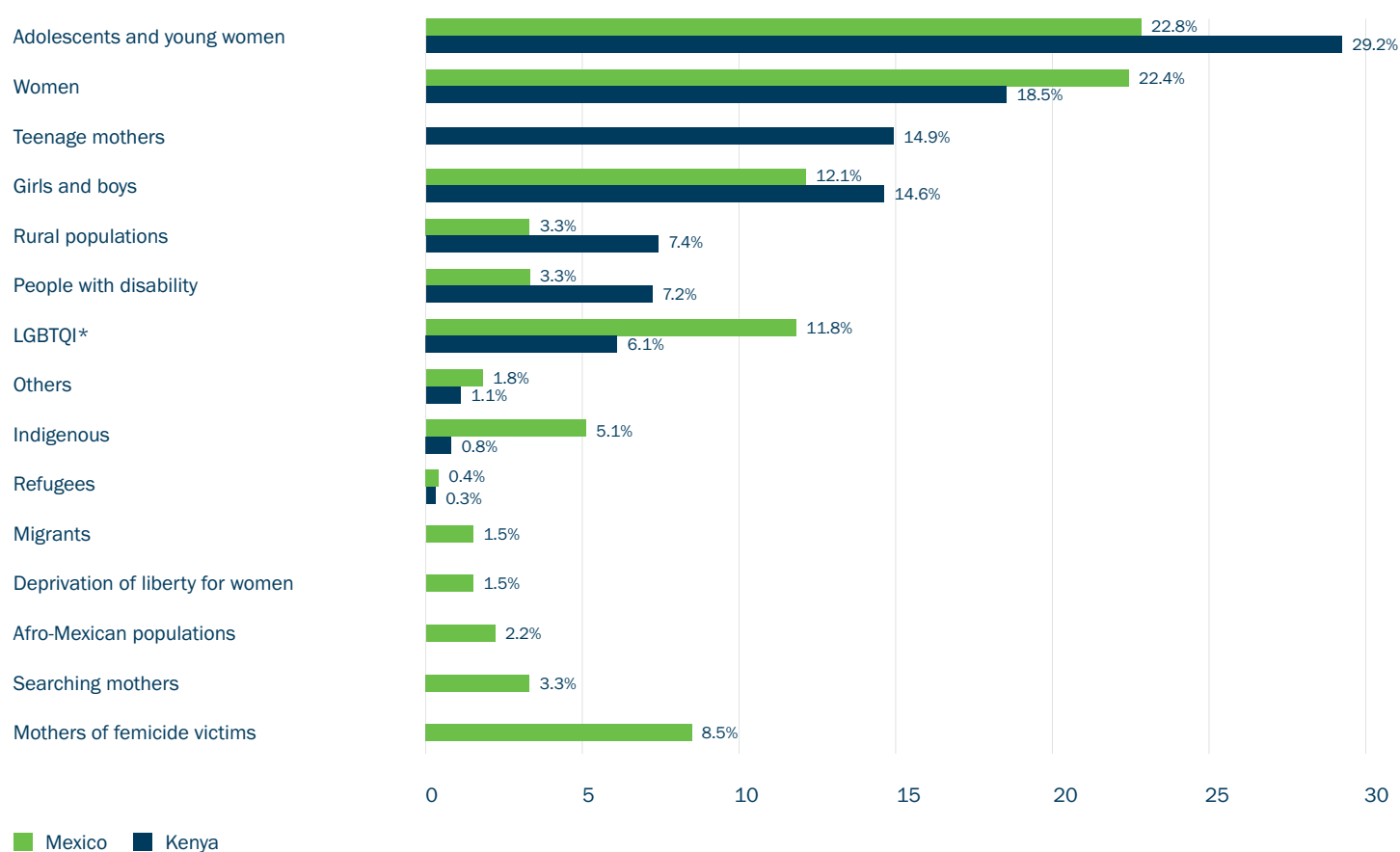
Figure 3: Percent distribution of different advocacy/development sectors in which survey respondents are engaged



Population groups served by YFOs' programs, interventions, or actions:

According to the survey, most organizations in Kenya focus on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 15–25 (29.2%). Women aged 26 and over (18.5%), teenage mothers (14.9%), and boys and girls aged 14 and below (14.6%) were also targeted. A few organizations (7.4%) focused on rural populations, while others targeted people living with disabilities (7.2%) and LGBTQI individuals (6.1%). In Mexico, AGYW (22.7%), women (22.3%), and boys and girls (11.3%) were the primary focus groups. Compared to Kenya, twice as many organizations in Mexico targeted LGBTQI individuals (12.6% vs. 6.1%). There were also some unique differences between the two countries. For instance, some organizations in Mexico targeted mothers of femicide victims, Indigenous communities, “searching mothers,”⁴ Afro-Mexican communities that are not present in Kenya. On the other hand, persons with disabilities were a distinct population of interest in Kenya (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage breakdown of the population groups served by young feminists



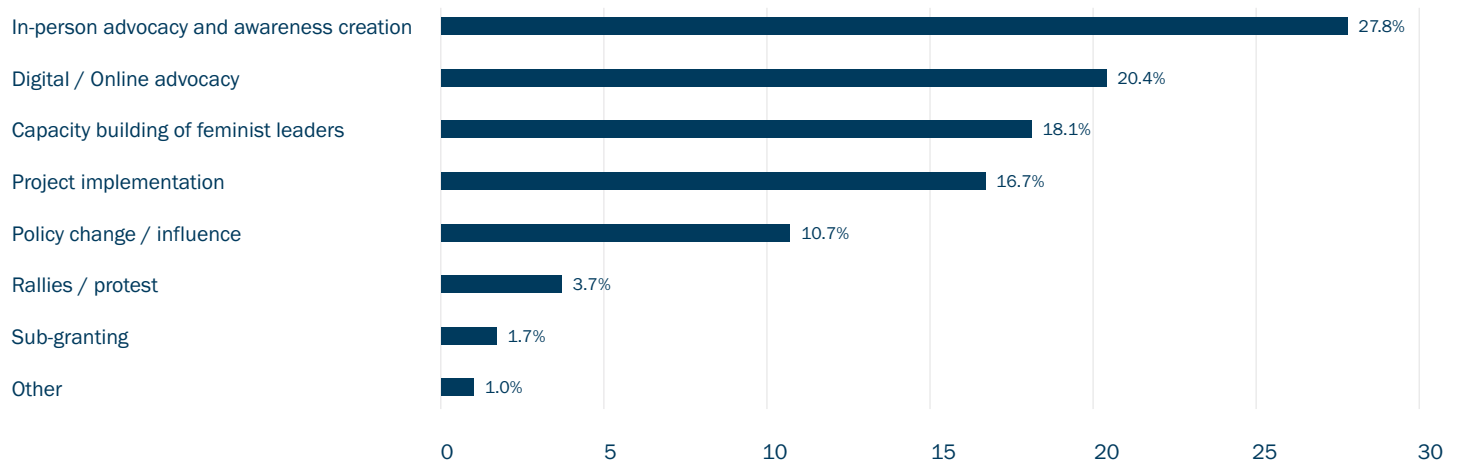
*Note: LGBTQI stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity), and intersex.

Tactics/strategies used by young feminists: The survey conducted in Kenya included questions related to the work strategies adopted by the participants (Figure 5). The results indicated that the most common tactics utilized by the respondents were in-person advocacy (27.8%), digital/online advocacy (20.4%), capacity building of feminist leaders (18.1%), and project implementation (16.7%). The proportion of older YFOs (25–35 years) across all tactics/strategies categories is larger than the younger age group (18–24 years), who reported using these tactics/strategies less

4. Although the term “searching mothers” (*madres buscadoras*) refers to mothers searching for missing children, it also includes wives, sisters, and daughters who have disappeared.

14 often. The younger age group constituted the largest proportion of participants that did not select any of the possible answers provided to the question, which might suggest either that younger YFOs use other tactics/strategies not reflected in the survey, or that they have not adopted these in their work yet. Nevertheless, in Kenya, feminist work is becoming more professional, where they are now engaging in projects that provide services or information to their target audiences. Project implementation is a key strategy used to organize such projects, for example providing safe spaces for adolescent girls to learn about crucial issues like their sexual and reproductive rights.

Figure 5: Tactics/strategies used by YFOs in Kenya



Note: The question allowed for multiple responses and was only asked in Kenya and not in Mexico.

Registration status of young feminist organizations: Most respondents in Kenya (86.1%) stated that their YFO was legally registered, while only 24.6% of respondents in Mexico reported the same (Table 2). In Kenya, those who responded “No” or “Do Not Know/Do Not Remember” regarding the registration status belonged to the youngest age group (18–24). In Mexico, the organization’s legal registration status did not seem to be related to age. A registered organization is an organization that gains legal entity status by registration. YFOs can either register as a community-based organization (CBO) or a nongovernmental organization (NGO); the latter type of registration is more expansive and requires more documentation related to strategy and organizational structure, whereas a CBO is seen as a more informal group, with a less stringent application process.

Table 2: Is the organization/institution legally registered?

	Kenya		Mexico	
	N	%	N	%
No	7	9.7	52	75.4
Yes	62	86.1	17	24.6
Do Not Know/Do Not Remember	3	4.2	-	-
Total	72*	100	69	100

*Note: There were 60 missing values for Kenya likely due to nonresponse to the question.

Funding for young feminist organizations: In Kenya, 41.2% of the respondents reported receiving funding in the year preceding the interviews. Among them, 70.0% were currently funded. Most of them (72.5%) mentioned that they had obtained the funds from outside the country (e.g., donor funds either directly from a development agency or from larger NGOs). In Mexico, almost a quarter of the respondents (24.6%) said that they were currently funded. However, only 16.1% of the respondents reported receiving funds in the last year (Table 3). Like Kenya, external funding, either from outside the country or local donors, was a major source of funding support in Mexico.

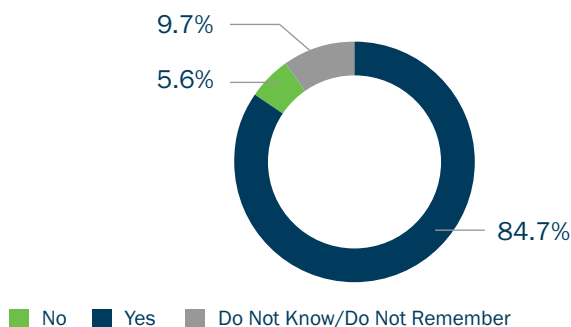
Table 3: Receipt of funding in the one year preceding the study

	Kenya		Mexico	
	N	%	N	%
No	44	45.4	52	83.9
Yes	40	41.2	10	16.1
Do Not Know/Do Not Remember	13	13.4	-	-
Total	97	100	62*	100

*Note: The total for Mexico excluded 7 YFOs that had received funding for more than one year.

Leadership structure of young feminist organizations: In Kenya, respondents who reported being part of a YFO were asked about the presence of a leadership structure or “organogram” in their organization. Out of the 72 respondents, 61 (84.7%) confirmed the existence of a leadership structure in their organization, while less than 10% (n=7) did not have a leadership structure. Among those who reported having no leadership structure, 57.1% belonged to community-based organizations (CBOs) and were aged between 18 and 24. On the other hand, all older respondents who did not have leadership structures belonged to academic institutions (Figure 6).

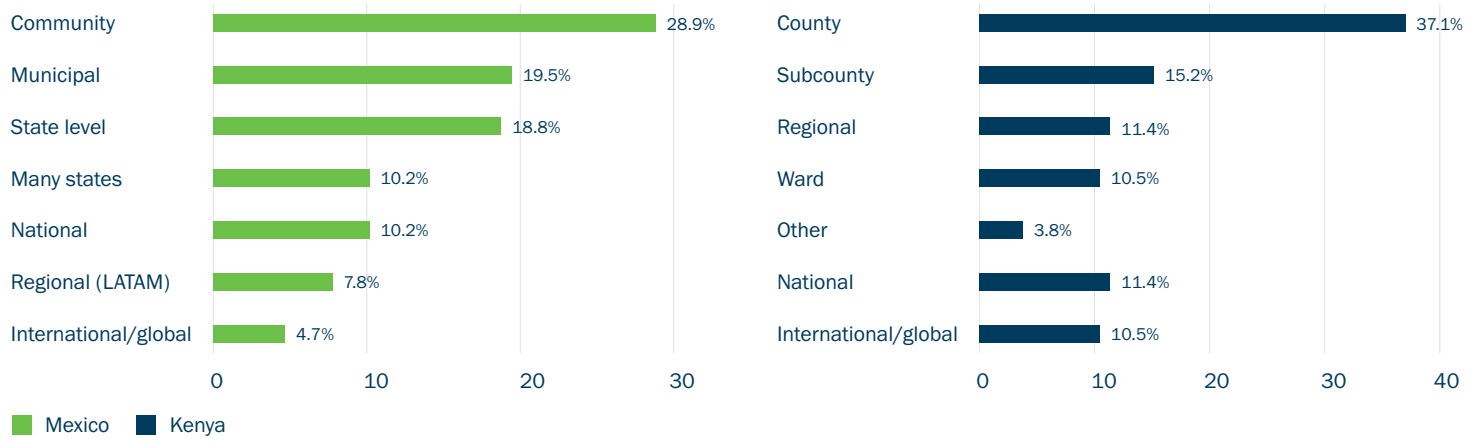
Figure 6: Existence of organizational/leadership structure of YFOs in Kenya



Note: This question was only asked in Kenya.

16 Operational areas of young feminists' work: The survey conducted in Kenya and Mexico revealed interesting insights about the administrative levels at which respondents engaged in activities.⁵ Figure 7 shows that in Kenya, most respondents (37.1%) engaged in activities at the county level, followed by the subcounty level (15.2%). It was observed that the age group of 25–35 years was the largest demographic that worked across these two administrative levels. Interestingly, the youngest age group (18–24 years) was more inclined to engage at the regional and national levels. In Mexico, most of the activities were conducted at the community level (28.9%), followed by the municipal level (19.5%) and the state level (18.8%). Like Kenya, the age group of 25–35 years was the largest demographic working across these three administrative levels in Mexico.

Figure 7: Operational areas of YFOs' work in Kenya and Mexico



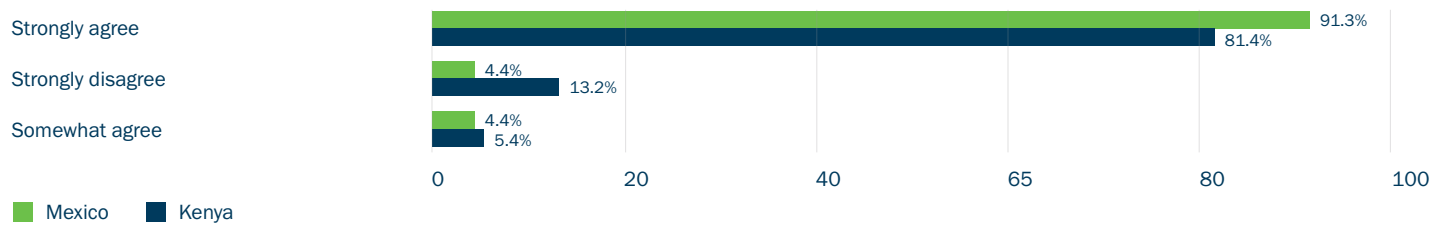
Communication and collaboration with other actors: A significant percentage of respondents in Kenya (81.4%) and Mexico (91.3%) have emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration with other institutions in their work. As a result, most of the respondents reported having collaborated with other feminist actors, such as organizations and donors, in the past three years. In Mexico, more respondents (84.6%) have collaborated with other institutions in the last three years compared to Kenya (63.6%).

In Kenya, most of the younger respondents within the 18–24 age bracket (85.7%) have not collaborated with other institutions in the past three years. However, over two-thirds (68.3%) of the older Kenyan respondents within the 25–35 age bracket have reported collaborating with other feminist actors.

In Mexico, 60% of older respondents aged 25–32 have collaborated with other institutions in the last three years, whereas 40% of younger respondents aged 18–24 have reported collaborating with other institutions (Figure 8).

5. In Kenya, the administrative structures consist of counties, subcounties, and wards. In Mexico, the second-level administrative divisions are municipalities (*municipios*), with the first-level administrative division being the state. Community refers to a group of people living in a specific locality.

Figure 8: Collaboration with other institutions is important



Membership in a local, national, or global alliance, technical working group, or community of practice:

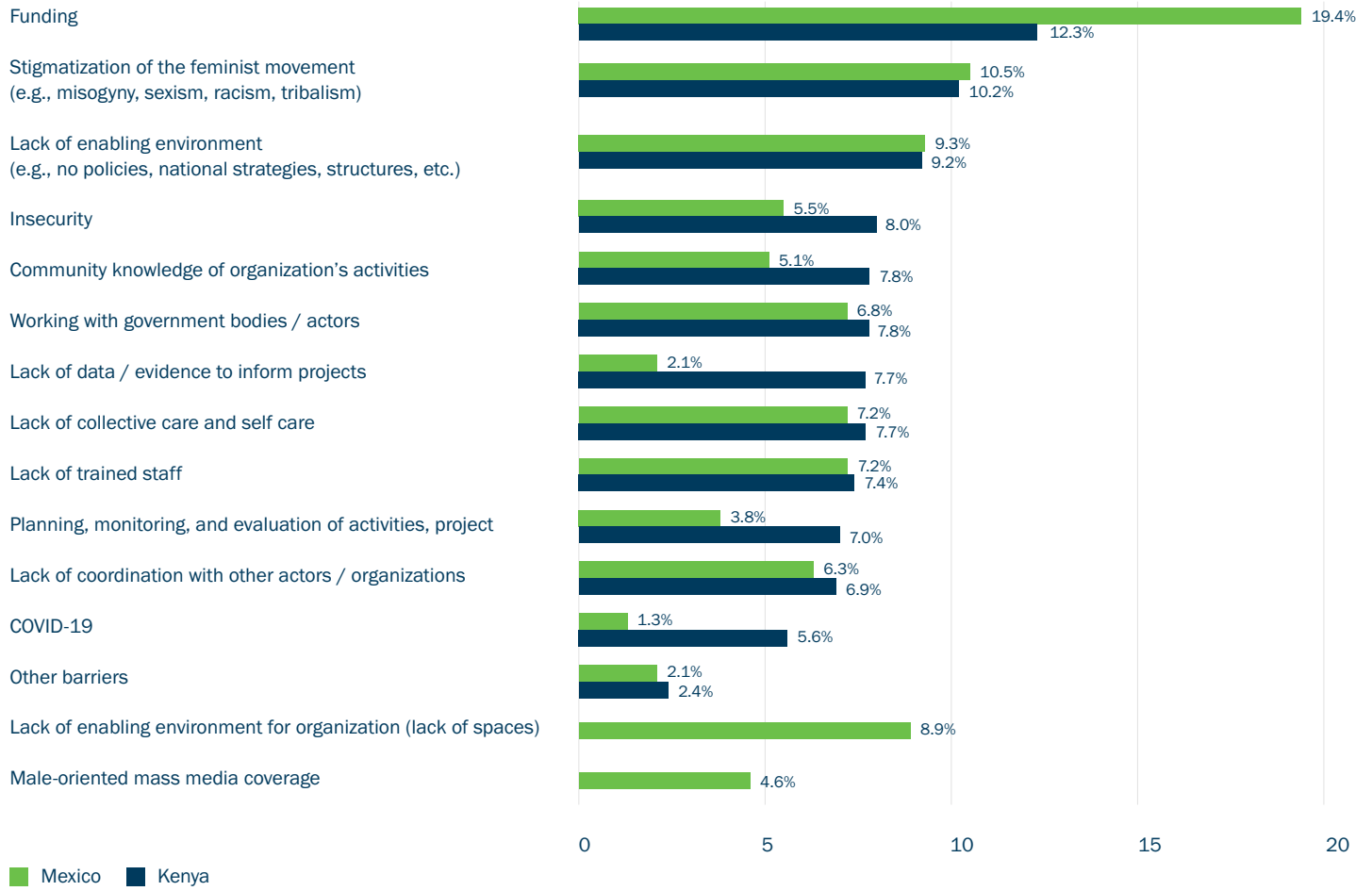
The data show that in Kenya almost half of the respondents (47.3%) reported being part of a local, national, or global alliance, technical working group, or community of practice. It was observed that twice as many respondents aged between 25 and 35 indicated that they belonged to such groups (65.6% vs. 34.4%). A larger proportion of younger respondents reported that they “Do Not Know/Do Not Remember” (55.6% vs. 44.4%) being part of a local, national, or global alliance, technical working group, or community of practice. On the other hand, in Mexico, a slightly higher number, more than half (58%), reported that they were not part of local, national, or global alliances, technical working groups, or communities of practice. Despite the small Mexican sample (n=69), it is noteworthy that of the 42% of Mexican YFOs who reported being part of local, national, or global alliances, technical working groups, or communities, 69% were YFOs aged between 25 and 35.

Barriers and challenges that impact young feminist organizations:

According to the respondents, their work is hindered by several barriers and challenges (Figure 9). In Kenya, funding is identified as the major barrier (12.3%). This is followed by the stigmatization of the feminist movement (10.2%), lack of enabling environments (9.2%), and insecurity (8%), among other challenges. Both older and younger respondents agree that funding (50.4% vs. 49.6%), stigmatization (51% vs. 49%), and lack of an enabling environment (50%) were major challenges.

Similarly, in Mexico, most respondents identified funding (19.4%), stigmatization of feminist movements (10.5%), and lack of enabling environments (9.3%) as major challenges. Additionally, male-oriented mass media coverage (4.6%) was noted as a barrier affecting young feminist work. In Mexico, older YFOs (25–32 years) were more concerned than younger respondents (18–24 years) about funding (65.4% vs. 34.6%), stigmatization (62.1% vs. 37.9%), and enabling environments (65.4% vs. 34.6%).

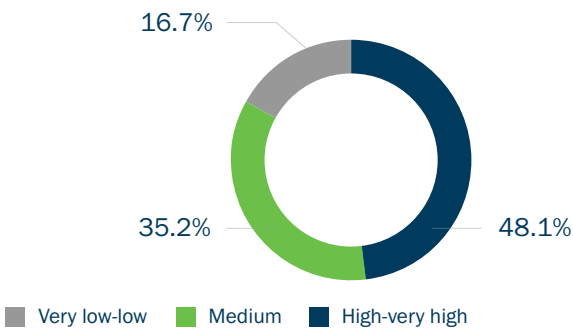
18 Figure 9: Percentage distribution of the main barriers and challenges facing young feminists in their work



Note: The question allowed for multiple responses

YFOs' impact on policies, actions, or programs at the community, local, national, and international levels: In Mexico, nearly half of the respondents (48.1%) mentioned that their impact was high-very high; over one-third (35.2%) referred to a medium effect/impact; and one-sixth (16.7%) thought that impact was very low-low (Figure 10). Compared to older YFOs (25–32 years), younger participants (18–24 years) referred to the impact of their work as high-very high (42.3% vs. 57.7%). Conversely, a higher proportion of older YFOs mentioned a medium effect/impact (68.4% vs. 31.6%).

Figure 10: YFOs' impact on policies, actions, or programs at the community, local, national, and international levels (Mexico)



Note: This question was only asked in Mexico.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The online survey conducted in Kenya and Mexico showed almost an equal participation rate among the younger (18–24 years) and older age bands (25–35). In Mexico, a slightly higher proportion of older respondents participated than younger respondents. However, the online survey reached both younger and older respondents in both countries. The average age of the participants was approximately 25 years, as indicated by the mean age in Kenya (25.6) and Mexico (25.8), respectively.

20 → **In Kenya and Mexico, there was an overlap between the self-identification of younger and older respondents regarding actor type.**

The analysis revealed that younger respondents between 18 and 24 were more likely to identify as individual young feminists, with 61.2% in Kenya and 66.7% in Mexico falling into this category. In contrast, older respondents between the ages of 25 and 35 were more likely to be identified as part of the civil society organization/community-based organization/nongovernmental organization (CSO/CBO/NGO) sector, with 53.8% in Kenya and 57.7% in Mexico falling into this category. This suggests that feminism may follow a growth trajectory where individuals initially engage with it at a personal level and later become more established, joining or creating formal organizations such as CBOs/NGOs.

→ **According to the data, almost half of the survey respondents in Kenya and Mexico have been involved in feminist movements for a period of 1–5 years. However, unlike in Mexico, none of the respondents aged 18–24 in Kenya have been a part of the feminist movement for more than five years.** The survey results also indicate that twice as many respondents in Kenya (23.5%) as compared to Mexico (11.3%) had been in the feminist movement for 0–1 year. In both countries, respondents between the ages of 25–35 form the larger proportion of those who have been involved in feminist spaces for over 5 years. These findings suggest a possible generational shift where an increasing number of younger people in Kenya are more inclined to question and challenge traditional gender norms and power structures. This shift in mindset may have created an environment where young people feel empowered to embrace feminist ideologies and advocate for change.

→ **Young feminists in Kenya and Mexico are actively involved in similar thematic areas such as gender equity, human rights, feminist movement building, health, education, and environmental sectors. However, the older age group seems to be less diversified, mainly focusing on thematic areas such as gender equity, human rights, and feminist movement building.** Generally, older feminists have more experience, established networks, and leadership positions, which may explain their dominant presence in the feminist movement. In addition, generational differences, funding, and institutional

support can also reinforce their dominance. On the other hand, younger feminists seem to be more diversified covering a wide range of thematic areas and with broadening agendas that include emerging thematic areas, such as climate change. Nevertheless, the feminist movement needs to promote intergenerational collaboration, mentorship, and amplification of younger voices. A balanced and inclusive approach that values the contributions of feminists across generations can strengthen the movement's impact and relevance in both countries.

→ **The population groups served by young feminists in Kenya and Mexico are similar, with a few minor differences.** Adolescent girls and young women, women, teenage mothers, and girls and boys are the most common groups targeted in both countries. In Mexico, Indigenous communities, “searching mothers,” and Afro-Mexican communities are also targeted, whereas in Kenya, persons with disabilities are the only unique group. Young feminists in both countries may focus on similar groups or issues due to global feminist solidarity, an intersectional approach, transnational feminist networks' influence, common colonial and post-colonial experiences, global development agendas and frameworks, and shared socioeconomic and environmental challenges. However, it's important to note that the feminist movement within each country is likely diverse and heterogeneous, with different priorities and perspectives represented among various groups of young feminists.

→ **In Kenya, most activists use the following tactics for their advocacy: in-person advocacy, digital/online advocacy, and project implementation.** The data show that the older age groups (25–35 years) use these strategies more frequently than the younger age groups. The data also indicate that the younger age group was less likely to select any of the possible answers provided to this question suggesting either that younger YFOs use other tactics/strategies that were not reflected in the survey, or that they use a wider range of tactics instead of a few. Overall, Kenyan YFOs use different methods to tackle various challenges. They make use of in-person advocacy, digital/online advocacy, and project implementation to engage with different audiences, build capacity and empowerment, and adjust to diverse contexts.

- **In Kenya, a vast majority of respondents (86.1%) who are part of a YFO reported the organization was legally registered compared to almost a quarter (24.6%) of YFO in Mexico.** In Kenya, a significant number of younger respondents aged 18–24 were either not part of a legally registered organization or were unsure about the registration status of the YFO. On the other hand, in Mexico, the legal registration of an organization does not seem to be age dependent. In recent years, the feminist movement in Mexico has undergone a transformation with the emergence of new forms of organizing that do not necessarily require legal registration. These new forms of feminist movements (which appear to be part of the young feminists in Kenya) usually challenge traditional ways of organizing.
- **Less than half of the YFOs (41.2%) in Kenya and around a quarter in Mexico (24.6%) received funding in the year preceding the interviews.** Most of the funding comes from external sources in both countries. Young feminists in Kenya rely on external funding more than their counterparts in Mexico. This trend may be due to limited local funding opportunities and a greater willingness from donors to support women’s empowerment initiatives in Kenya. Additionally, economic, political, or cultural barriers may make it challenging for feminist movements to access local funding. While external funding can help young feminists in Kenya, relying too much on it can pose risks. A balanced approach combining external and local funding sources can help create a more sustainable feminist movement in Kenya.
- **Respondents in Kenya and Mexico implement activities at both local and national level administrative units — at community and state levels.** YFO operations in Kenya are mainly carried out at the county and subcounty levels. In Mexico, activities take place at the community, state, and municipal levels. It is observed that a significant proportion of individuals aged between 25–35 years are involved in implementing activities in these administrative units in both countries. However, in Kenya, younger respondents (18–24 years) tend to focus their activities at the regional and national levels, likely because older age groups dominate the local advocacy space.
- **Communication/collaboration with other actors is a common feature of young feminist organizing.** The majority of respondents in Kenya (81.4%) and Mexico (91.3%) believe communication/collaboration with other actors is vital. Effective communication/collaboration among young feminists in Kenya and Mexico is vital for building solidarity, amplifying voices, addressing intersectional challenges, sharing resources and knowledge, fostering cross-cultural understanding, creating networks and partnerships, and strengthening the global feminist movement. It is an essential tool for young feminists to learn from each other, leverage their collective power, and advance their shared goals of creating more just and equitable societies.
- **In Kenya and Mexico, the main barriers and challenges inhibiting the young feminist movement appear similar.** Respondents from Kenya and Mexico have identified difficulties in ensuring funding and sustainability, stigmatization, and lack of supportive environments as the primary obstacles to YFO movement building. Other challenges include insecurity, lack of data, and media coverage catering only to male audiences. Despite their cultural and geographic differences, the young feminist movements in these two countries face similar barriers and challenges. While these issues may manifest differently across communities and regions, acknowledging shared experiences can promote knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and solidarity among young feminists in Kenya and Mexico. Despite the challenges identified by YFOs in Mexico, most participants believed that their work has had a big impact on policies, actions, or programs at the community, local, national, and international levels. This reflects the relevance of the feminist and women’s rights movements in shaping societal realities and driving policy change in the country.

22 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Our online survey of young feminists revealed some notable challenges and limitations. We used a convenience sample of YFOs in Kenya and Mexico that we identified through mapping and shared the survey link with YFO networks via email, social media (Facebook and Instagram), and a QR WhatsApp code, as well as through referrals from the FAP. However, this method may not have reached all YFOs, particularly those from marginalized communities or rural areas who may not have had equal access to the internet or digital devices required for the survey. This can lead to sampling biases and underrepresentation of certain demographics or perspectives. In addition, some YFOs did not complete the survey, and multiple attempts to reach them proved difficult or did not bear results.

Since the survey was self-administered on a virtual platform, there was limited ability to probe or clarify missing responses. Also, it may have been difficult to verify the authenticity of survey respondents, potentially allowing for misleading or inaccurate data to be collected. We faced challenges reaching Mexican respondents due to suspicion toward unknown sources of survey links, tensions with international organizations, and declining response rates among Mexican youth.

Despite the challenges and limitations, our results are a first step in generating data on the YFO landscape in Kenya and Mexico to contribute to filling information gaps regarding background characteristics, key focus areas, methods of communication and collaboration, legal status, funding, and populations served by YFO programs, interventions, and actions. Furthermore, our results shed light on YFOs' operations, challenges, organization, and shared experiences, which could be useful for donors who are looking to support youth-led movements.

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The Population Council-Kenya in partnership with the Population Council-Mexico and the Girl Innovation, Research, and Learning (GIRL) Center is implementing the Nawiri Project. The project conducts participatory, young-feminist-centered research and works closely with young feminist organizers (YFO), academics, and identified stakeholders to provide insights on the landscape of young feminist organizing and the impact (fostering improved outcomes and sustained change in government policies and society) with a focus on Kenya and Mexico.



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