



## **Youth Survey Findings & Strategic Priorities for FY27 (July 2026–June 2027)**

Last month, Girl Up shared a global youth survey in five languages across social media, mailing lists, and community platforms. The goal of the survey was to better understand what is serving youth leaders well within Girl Up, what may feel challenging or disconnected from their realities, and where youth want additional support, resources, learning opportunities, and investment moving forward.

Youth were asked to reflect on questions about:

- what specifically helped them lead effectively this year,
- what may have made leadership harder than it needed to be,
- how Girl Up could better support clubs and youth organizing efforts,
- when Girl Up felt most aligned – or disconnected – from their values,
- what may feel outdated or less relevant in their current contexts,
- and what personal sacrifices youth are making to stay engaged in leadership and advocacy work.

We are using these findings to help shape Girl Up’s priorities and work throughout our next fiscal year, July 2026–June 2027.

---

The survey revealed a consistent and encouraging message: **youth continue to see Girl Up as a powerful catalyst for leadership development, confidence building, advocacy, and community.** Respondents described Girl Up as a space where they found their voice, built meaningful relationships, gained access to opportunities, and developed the confidence to lead change in their communities.

At the same time, youth signaled a desire for Girl Up to evolve. While **leadership development remains essential**, respondents repeatedly emphasized the **need for stronger systems, resources, and support structures that enable leadership to translate into action.** Across regions, youth called for more mentorship, funding, visibility, communication, transparency, and influence over decisions that affect them.

---

## **Strategic Priority 1. To Build Safe and Trustworthy Leadership Ecosystems**

Youth consistently expressed a desire for **systems that feel fair, predictable, and responsive**. A modern, feminist safeguarding approach extends beyond incident response to encompass the conditions that prevent harm and foster trust. The survey suggests that defining “safeguarding” - including how youth activists and Girl Up clubs understand it, what they need to feel safe while advocating on the frontlines, and what partnerships Girl Up must develop to support regional and global prevention and response mechanisms - may be among the most important safeguarding investments Girl Up can make in 2027.

### *Key FY27 Operations and Systems Implications*

- Strengthen communication and transparency standards.
  - Develop regionally relevant safeguarding pathways and referral systems.
  - Increase clarity around opportunity selection and decision-making processes.
  - Ensure youth know where and how to seek support.
- 

## **Strategic Priority 2. To Shift Resources and Decision-Making Closer to Youth**

Youth repeatedly requested **funding, mentorship, visibility, practical support, and greater involvement in shaping priorities and opportunities**. The underlying message was not simply a request for more support, but for **greater proximity to regional decision-making power**. Girl Up clubs **want more meaningful influence** over the programs, priorities, and narratives that affect their communities. Girl and youth activists are requesting increased access to microgrants and youth-led funding opportunities that can be directed regionally.

### *Key FY27 Operations and Systems Implications*

- Expand regional decision-making authority with more budget control and grantmaking autonomy.
  - Invest in regional and country-level youth leadership infrastructure.
  - Create structured mechanisms for youth participation in governance and strategy.
-

### **Strategic Priority 3. To Measure Leadership Through Agency, Relationships, and Collective Action**

Youth repeatedly **described increased confidence, belonging, courage, solidarity, connection, and community** as among the most important outcomes of their involvement with Girl Up. These findings reinforce the importance of **measuring leadership as a collective and relational process rather than solely as an individual achievement** – something that already exists and now needs to be more fully documented and understood.

The survey also highlighted an opportunity for Girl Up to continue **developing learning and evaluation approaches** that recognize leadership as something expressed through relationships, mutual support, community influence, and collective action – not simply through participation counts or program outputs alone.

#### *Key FY27 Operations and Systems Implications*

- Elevate youth-defined indicators of success.
- Measure belonging, agency, confidence, and collective action.
- Invest in qualitative storytelling and participatory learning.
- Capture evidence of community influence and systems change alongside traditional outputs.

---

### **Strategic Priority 4. To Resource Youth Care, Sustainability, and Resilience**

Perhaps the most significant finding was the extent to which youth leaders are sustaining their **leadership through personal sacrifice**. Respondents described giving significant amounts of time, balancing academic responsibilities, managing stress, and, in some cases, contributing their own financial resources to support their leadership and advocacy work.

These responses suggest that **many of Girl Up's most engaged leaders are operating under conditions that may not be sustainable** over the long term. The survey highlights an opportunity for global and regional youth investments to move beyond leadership development alone and toward a model that also prioritizes care, wellbeing, sustainability, and resilience. Girl Up convenings – both in-person and digital – should reflect those same

priorities in both their design and content, while also strengthening mentorship and peer support structures.

#### *Key FY27 Operations and Systems Implications*

- Invest in microgrants and financial access support.
  - Develop approaches to burnout prevention and leadership sustainability.
  - Incorporate wellbeing and resilience measures into leadership outcomes.
- 

### **Conclusion**

The survey findings point to the fact that Girl Up is a movement that remains deeply trusted by its youth leaders. Respondents overwhelmingly affirmed Girl Up's role in building confidence, leadership, belonging, and advocacy skills. There was little evidence of mission drift or declining relevance. Instead, youth are asking Girl Up to align its systems, resources, and structures more closely with its commitment to youth leadership.

As Girl Up enters the 2026–2027 planning cycle, the same message emerges: **youth are ready for deeper partnership, greater trust, and increased investment in the conditions that allow them to lead and thrive safely, sustainably, and at scale.**