



BUILDING STRONGER EQUALITY MOVEMENTS

**Intergenerational
approaches to advancing
women's and LGBT+ rights
in the Commonwealth**

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**justice
studio.**



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DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Backlash

Intense or targeted actions intended to thwart social change.

Bisexual (or *bi*)

A person whose sexual and/or romantic orientation may involve people of more than one gender.

Cisgender (or *cis*)

A person whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth.

Cisnormative/Cisnormativity

The assumption or belief that everyone's gender identity is always consistent with their sex assigned at birth and the organisation of the world on that basis.

Family violence

Family violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour by one or more family members against another. This includes: physical abuse (abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm); sexual abuse (any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity); verbal abuse (a form of emotionally abusive behaviour involving the use of language); and economic abuse (a form of abuse when one or more family members have control over another's access to economic resources).

Gay

A person whose gender is male and whose sexual orientation is toward other people whose gender identity is also male. Gay may also be used as an umbrella term to refer to all homosexual people regardless of their gender identity.

Gender diverse

Used as an umbrella term in this report for people who are gender non-conforming, gender queer, gender neutral, third gender or whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not accord with binary norms in other ways.

Gender expression

A person's way of communicating culturally defined traits of masculinity or femininity (or both, or neither, or another gender) externally through physical appearance (e.g. through the use of clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and the use of cosmetics), mannerisms, ways of speaking, and behavioural patterns in interactions with others.¹

Gender identity

Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if personally chosen, modification of the bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means), and other expressions of gender including dress, speech and mannerisms.²

Gender non-binary

Non-binary people feel their gender identity cannot be defined within the margins of gender binary. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman. Non-binary can be defined as identifying as either having a gender which is in between or beyond the two categories *man* and *woman*, as fluctuating between *man* and *woman*, or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time.³

Gender-based violence

The term gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence, trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance.⁴

Heteronormative/ Heteronormativity

The assumption or belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual and the organisation of the world on that basis.

Heterosexual

A person whose sexual orientation is towards people of the opposite gender as themselves (assuming binary gender norms).

Homosexual

A person whose sexual orientation is towards people of the same gender as themselves.

Intersex

A person born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads or chromosome patterns) that do not align with medical and social norms for female and male bodies.

Intersectionality

The concept that overlapping identities such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and other differences contribute to systematic oppression, discrimination and interaction with others. It is also a term for ways of working together to seek justice holistically to address these complex forms of discrimination.

Intergenerational

Processes that relate to, involve, or affect several generations.

Lesbian

A person whose gender identity is female whose sexual orientation is towards other people whose gender identity is also female.

Queer

A reclaimed term increasingly used as an umbrella term for people of all kinds of sexual and gender diversities, and sometimes used to imply a more radical perspective. Queering may also be used to refer to acts outside of sexual and gender diversity issues, where a binary or norm is challenged. Queer has also been used as a slur, predominantly against gay men, and is still understood as a slur by some gay men. For this reason, the term queer is avoided in this report where possible.

Resistance

Passive efforts to frustrate social change.

Sex assigned at birth

Official registration of one's sex after birth, on the basis of male or female genitals. This assignment may or may not accord with the individual's own sense of gender identity as they grow up.⁵

Sex binary

The stereotypical categorisation of bodies as male or female, based on sex characteristics, and the organisation of the world on that assumed norm.

Sex characteristics

Genetic, hormonal and anatomical characteristics of bodies, configurations of which are used for stereotypical categorisation of bodies as male or female.

Sexual orientation

A person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, or the same gender or more than one gender.⁶

Third gender

A person who has a gender identity that is neither male or female. Third gender people may also demonstrate fluidity within their gender identity and may occupy social roles typically associated with one or more gender identities. Third gender identities are usually culturally specific, and third gender people may or may not identify as transgender.

Transgender (or *trans*)

A person who identifies themselves: 'in a different gender than that assigned at birth. They may express their identity differently to that expected of the gender role they were assigned at birth. Trans/transgender people often identify themselves in ways that are locally, socially, culturally, religiously or spiritually defined.'⁷ Some transgender people are binary, their gender identity being the opposite to that assigned at birth, while others may identify as non-binary trans masculine, non-binary trans feminine, or in other ways. Transgender is sometimes used as a broader umbrella term, including those whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, but whose gender expression is at variance with social norms or who otherwise challenge gender norms in their behaviour.

Trans man

A transgender person assigned female at birth but whose gender identity is male.

Trans woman

A transgender person assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is female.

ACRONYMS

AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CYGEN	Commonwealth Youth, Gender and Equality Network
ECADE	Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality
EJA	Equality and Justice Alliance
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
J-FLAG	Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SMUG	Sexual Minorities Uganda
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STER	Stand to End Rape Initiative
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA) is committed to advancing equality and promoting equal protection of the law for all Commonwealth citizens, regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Established in 2018, by a consortium of international NGOs, the EJA is looking to effect social change in Commonwealth countries by supporting Commonwealth governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to reform laws that discriminate against women and girls and LGBT+ people, many of which are remnants from the time of British colonialism. An important part of this work is strengthening intergenerational dialogue within and between women's and LGBT+ movements. As such, in March 2019, EJA commissioned Justice Studio to undertake this multi-country research into intergenerational movement building.

The research used a mixed methodology of quantitative mapping of 207 movements, organisations and campaigns; a literature review of academic and grey literature; and qualitative in-depth interviews with 16 women's, feminist and LGBT+ activists from Commonwealth countries and others such as Nepal and Zimbabwe with similar experiences of discrimination and colonisation. Building on the experiences of these activists, the research presents civil society organisations with an array of best practice examples for intergenerational movement building.

Understanding an intergenerational approach to gender equality movements

The world is structured hierarchically: it is patriarchal, it is cis heteronormative, it is racially hierarchical and privileges whiteness, and remains underpinned by a historical legacy of colonial oppression and slavery. Women's and LGBT+ movements in Commonwealth countries are fighting to rebalance these oppressive power structures.

Intergenerational movement building is understood in different ways by activists, organisations and movements. At a theoretical level, intergenerational simply means relating to, involving, or affecting several generations. How this is practically applied and understood differs. However, it is important to recognise there are power dynamics between generations, and that gaps and misunderstandings across the generations can be accentuated within the context of a social movement.

Intergenerational movement building can be the most sustainable and impactful type of action. It promotes inclusion and can amplify younger and older voices. Because it is able to draw from old and new knowledge and skills, it has an increased capacity and strength, with the wisdom of the older generation ensuring that it is able to learn from past successes and challenges, while the vitality of the younger generation brings new thinking and approaches.

Intergenerational approaches can also be a means to promote greater connectedness and friendship. When embedded in a genuine desire to understand each viewpoint, and learn from each other, intergenerational movements can bridge divides and unite otherwise polarised views. Mutual respect builds solidarity, collective responsibility and critical mass that spreads across geographies and times to advance the cause and create change at all levels.

Barriers and challenges to intergenerational movement building

There are a number of barriers and challenges in intergenerational movement building within women's and LGBT+ movements in Commonwealth countries. For example, colonial rule often reinforced or established patriarchal structures, imposed binary gender categories and made same-sex relations illegal and culturally taboo. The 1860 Indian Penal Code, which criminalised homosexual acts between men and made exemptions for marital rape, among other discriminatory provisions, became a blueprint for colonial penal codes that were exported to almost every British colony. Across the Commonwealth, many of these laws remain in force today. This legacy of criminalisation has resulted in different generations of LGBT+ and women's rights activists having different experiences of social and legal acceptance, such as being supported rather than rejected by friends and family.

A variety of other legal, political and social challenges were faced by the women's rights and LGBT+ activists in the research, which impeded bringing different generations together. For example, religious attitudes were raised as challenges to women's and LGBT+ movements by activists in the Caribbean, Nigeria, Botswana and Zimbabwe. In the Namibian women's movement, it was noted that if a movement's activity is "*not religious ... then elders will not participate*".⁸ Participants also raised challenges relating to cultural expectations or norms that impact on whether people of different ages are able or willing to become involved in movements. In the women's movement, patriarchal social structures and expectations about respect for elders can discourage young people from participating.

Challenges for younger activists include hegemonic seniority – where older activists exclude and are condescending toward younger activists. A number of research participants also drew attention to the tokenistic inclusion of young voices within the movements. As such, a key challenge with intergenerational movement building is ensuring that it is genuine and meaningful rather than tokenistic.

Good practice in intergenerational movement building

When the barriers to intergenerational movement building can be overcome, activists and community members report significant benefits at both a personal and movement level. In order to improve intergenerational movement building, it is important to understand principles of engagement as well as employing certain methods and practices at particular points in movement building and strengthening.

According to the activists consulted, the key principles to intergenerational movement building are ensuring meaningful engagement, having an appreciation of each generation's experience and perspectives, and respecting each generation's culture and communication preferences. Biases need to be acknowledged and overcome and older and younger activists must be willing to learn from each other. In this way, it can be ensured that there is *nothing about us without us*. Intergenerational learning must "*go in both (or more) directions*" and must be "*mutual and non-hierarchical*".⁹ In achieving these principles, one can also aim to expand individual, familial and collective power.

Intergenerational movement building can, and should, be achieved at all stages of a movement's life cycle, from the inception stage to strengthening an existing movement through capacity building and mentoring. For a movement to last, it is crucial to ensure intergenerationality, with succession planning and positive transitions across lifetimes. An intergenerational approach requires people of a range of ages and identities to feel a sense of ownership to drive a message that's actually sustainable.

Conclusion

To be truly meaningful, intergenerational movements must ensure that power is shared within, and among the generations. Younger and older activists must be allowed to flourish and achieve *power with* each other. Movements should not only seek to be intergenerational, they must be more broadly intersectional within, and among, the generations.¹⁰ Change and adaptation is an important part of building an inclusive and responsive movement, and as one participant explained: "*change is inevitable and other people inputting into an idea doesn't mean they're not respecting you.*"

Despite the challenges faced, the research indicates that many women's and LGBT+ movements have made strides in building intergenerational dialogue and cooperation. Key drivers of success are finding common ground, trying to set aside resentment and distrust, working towards collective responsibility, and acknowledging and appreciating what each generation can bring to the movement. Where this has been achieved, activists of all generations report improved experiences, enhanced knowledge sharing and skills development, an enriched understanding of the historical narrative of the movement, and development of personal relationships and support mechanisms. Capitalising on this solidarity can strengthen, and make more effective, the drive towards equality.

1 Introduction

In 2018, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, UK Prime Minister Theresa May expressed deep regret for Britain's role in instituting laws that discriminate against women and girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people, many of which remain in effect today. Mrs May also offered the UK government's support to Commonwealth countries that wanted to reform these discriminatory laws. To catalyse this process, the two-year Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA) programme was launched with the overarching aim of providing support to countries seeking to address the systemic discrimination faced by women and girls and LGBT+ people. The Alliance is a consortium of four international NGOs: Human Dignity Trust, Kaleidoscope Trust, Sisters for Change and The Royal Commonwealth Society.¹¹

The EJA recognises the vital role movements play in asserting, demanding and realising rights, and in challenging discriminatory laws and policies. It views intersectional forms of collective organising as particularly effective for facilitating gender-transformative social and political change. Driven by these convictions, the EJA is supporting coalitions of Commonwealth civil society organisations to work intersectionally and conduct collective advocacy. It has facilitated dialogue and knowledge sharing between civil society, government and other relevant stakeholders in order to build a better understanding of international standards and best practices. It has also provided technical legal assistance and expertise to Commonwealth governments seeking to reform discriminatory laws, combat violence against women and girls, eliminate hate crimes and increase access to justice. The commonalities across laws, legal systems and histories of the countries formerly under British colonial rule make this a particularly revealing and useful exercise. Lessons and insights often have relevance for different Commonwealth countries and there is the potential for good practices and strategies to be adapted to diverse contexts.

As part of the programme, the *Building Stronger Equality Movements* series has been produced. The series explores the connected issues of intersectionality, intergenerational ways of working and backlash in the context of collective organising for LGBT+ and women's rights movements. Grounded in the perspectives and stories of activists in Commonwealth global south countries, the papers highlight good practices as well as challenges in building movements for more inclusive, gender equitable societies.

This paper – the second in the series – aims to demystify the topic of intergenerationality. Looking particularly at movements relating to women's and LGBT+ rights, the paper seeks to understand the extent to which intergenerational approaches to movement building are applied in different contexts. As well as looking at them through an intergenerational lens, the research takes into account other intersections such as class, race and ethnicity. Building on the experiences of these activists, the research provides insights into challenges as well as good practice examples in order to strengthen knowledge and skills on intergenerational movement building. It is hoped that the paper will inspire others to converge and integrate into more cohesive movements, as well as supporting and inspiring those who are already engaged in intergenerational movement and alliance building.

1.1 Methodology

The research was carried out by Justice Studio between April and October 2019. Using a mixed methodology of desk-based research, organisational mapping, and in-depth stakeholder interviews, the study answered the following core questions:

What do we mean by intergenerational approaches within women's and LGBT+ movements?

- What implications does this have in ensuring diverse intergenerational representation along the lines of race, socio-economic class, religion, ethnicity?
- What implications does this have in respect of diverse cultures and traditions, especially in respect of contexts where age and experience create an intersection in themselves?
- What lessons can we learn from the past?

What is meaningful participation from the perspective of both young and older activists?

- What does this mean in theory and practice?
- How do we practically activate, operationalise and sustain an intergenerational, intersectional dialogue and movement?
- What does this mean in light of the current technological, socio-political and economic landscape at national, regional and international levels.

Are there examples and/or case studies of good practice where intersectional movements of women's and LGBT+ activists are working intergenerationally and collectively in Commonwealth global south countries?

- What lessons can we draw from these experiences?
- What key factors enabled or hindered these movements?

1.1.1 Desk-based research

As a first step, a search of academic literature was conducted using the EBSCO SocIndex journal collection, as well as searching grey literature such as reports, books, guidance, unpublished research findings, websites and journalism. The research was particularly focused on women's and LGBT+ movements. However, where relevant literature was available from other movements, this was also reviewed for transferable learning.

1.1.2 Movement mapping

A mapping of the extent and existence of women's, feminist and LGBT+ movements, organisations and campaigns across 14 Commonwealth countries was conducted as a first step to understanding the depth and breadth of the movements and in order to establish relevant stakeholders for further discussion. These countries were:

East and Southern Africa

Botswana

Kenya

Mauritius

Namibia

Uganda

The Caribbean

Barbados

Jamaica

St Lucia

St Vincent and the Grenadines

Trinidad and Tobago

The Pacific

Fiji

Papua New Guinea

Samoa

Tonga

To establish what women's and LGBT+ movements, organisations and campaigns exist in each of the priority countries, extensive web searches were conducted.¹² A wide range of online databases and sources such as news articles and funding bodies were also searched.¹³

Searches were only conducted in English, which was likely to limit the total number of movements found for each country. However, in order to mitigate this, and to establish as many movements as possible in the timeframe, stakeholders were also asked about the key women's movements and organisations operating in their country. Once compiled, the movements were classified and cross referenced. Sixteen interviews were conducted with activists from women's movements and LGBT+ movements over the telephone and via Skype.¹⁴

The interviews were with:

Commonwealth Youth, Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN)

A youth-led gender network. It is building a network of young people from across the Commonwealth who can collaborate and share good practice in their work.

Country/Region: Commonwealth
Representative: Jacob Thomas

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)

A women's movement with an intergenerational team and youth projects. Over the past 30 years, FWRM has campaigned, researched, lobbied, trained and drafted policy and legislation in many areas that affect women's rights.

Country/Region: Fiji
Representative: Maraia Tabunakawai

Women in Fisheries

A women's movement with some youth members and projects. Its focus is on building an environmentally sustainable, socially appropriate and economically viable fisheries sector in Fiji.

Country/Region: Fiji
Representative: Joeli Bili

Samoa Victim Support Group

A women's movement established in 2005 to provide support and care for victims of domestic abuse. It has no specific youth-focused approaches.

Country/Region: Samoa
Representative: Lina Chang

Women LEAD

A women's movement with mixed aged participants. The organisation provides young women with intensive leadership training; skills-building opportunities; mentoring and a peer-support network; and university preparation.

Country/Region: Nepal¹⁵
Representative: Manasi Kogekar

Mitini Nepal

An LGBT+ movement with some youth members and projects. The organisation lobbies for the equal rights of LGBT+ people through interaction with policymakers and government stakeholders, media and other members of civil society as well as organising discussions, seminars, workshops, rallies and sit-ins.

Country/Region: Nepal
Representative: Sarita K.C

LOOM

A women's movement with some youth members and projects. LOOM harnesses the collective power of women through multi-generational activism, where activists across ages and experiences connect, organise and transform structures that obstruct our equality.

Country/Region: Nepal
Representatives: Jyotsna Maskay & Pushpa Joshi

Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE)

An LGBT+ movement with some youth members and youth projects. ECADE promotes intersectional collaboration and undertakes training, network expansion, development of grassroots HRDs (human rights defenders) and sensitisation of policy-makers and legislators.

Country/Region: Eastern Caribbean
Representative: Kenita Placide

Raise Your Voice

A women's movement formed in February 2012 by a group of socially minded women who saw the need to raise their voices and to advocate on behalf of victims of all forms of abuse and violence whether physical, psychological, emotional or sexual. It has no specific youth approaches.

Country/Region: Saint Lucia
Representative: Catherine Sealys

Equality Bahamas

A youth-led women's movement committed to public education, community engagement, and advocacy for women and girls, prioritising the most vulnerable. They have mixed-age participants.

Country/Region: Bahamas
Representative: Alicia Wallace

The Voice of Africa

A youth women's movement with mixed-age programming and members. It provides youth consulting services to young women to give them a dignified, purpose-filled life through integrative and participatory programmes.

Country/Region: Botswana and Zimbabwe
Representative: Mpho Mpofo

Stand to End Rape

A youth women's movement with mixed-age participants. It is a youth-led not for profit organisation advocating against sexual violence, providing prevention mechanisms and supporting survivors with psychosocial services.

Country/Region: Nigeria
Representative: Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi

Y-Fem Trust

A youth-led women's and LGBT+ group with no participation of older women. It focuses on girls' and women's leadership in Namibia and envisions a society in which young women are leaders and enjoy respect, dignity, bodily integrity, autonomy and choice.

Country/Region: Namibia
Representative: Florence Khaxas

Women Solidarity Namibia

A women's movement with no specific youth practices. The organisation grew out of an alliance called the Diversity Alliance of Namibia which links feminist, LGBT+ and sex workers organisations.

Country/Region: Namibia
Representative: Rosalinda Namises

Uganda Women's Network

A network of women's organisations with mixed-age membership. It is an advocacy organisation that coordinates collective action among women's rights and stakeholders for the attainment of gender equality and equity in Uganda.

Country/Region: Uganda
Representative: Rita Aciro

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG)

A network of LGBT+ organisations with mixed youth and older participation. SMUG formed in 2004 to advocate for policy reform and address the need to protect and support LGBTI individuals in Uganda.

Country/Region: Uganda
Representative: Pepe Julian Onziema

The results from the mapping and the interviews were analysed and triangulated to understand the themes that emerged across those consulted.¹⁶

2 Understanding an intergenerational approach in the context of gender equality movements

2.1 Power and movements

A movement is fluid and difficult to define. It is something more than individual or collective consciousness, and more than individual or collective activism. It conjures up a momentum and a breadth that sweeps across time, populations and borders, yet it is somewhat hazy and unclear to pin down. Within and among countries, we find many diverse groupings that include movements, organisations, campaigns and individual activists fighting for women's and LGBT+ equality.

To understand women's and LGBT+ movements it is important to first understand why they are necessary. The world is structured hierarchically. It is patriarchal in that men hold a disproportionate amount of structural power, influence and wealth. It is also cis heteronormative, in that gender is generally understood in many countries to be in binary male and female terms, and heterosexual relationships are widely accepted as normal. Patriarchy and cis heteronormativity are structural societal powers that women's and LGBT+ movements are challenging.

In many Commonwealth countries, it is also important to acknowledge the historic and ongoing legacy of colonial oppression and slavery, including unequal global diplomatic, social and corporate power structures.

Hierarchical global power structures such as patriarchy, cis heteronormativity and unequal race relations demonstrate *power-over*: domination or control by certain groups over others. Power-over was first described as a concept by Mary Parker Follett as "the power of one person or group over some other person or group,"¹⁷ and later by VeneKlasen and Miller as "access to and control over financial, physical and knowledge-based assets."¹⁸ For example, patriarchy maintains a disproportionate power by men over women, cis heteronormativity asserts the normalcy of heterosexual cisgender people over LGBT+ people, and white privilege sustains colonial hierarchies of race and ethnicity, even in a post-colonial global context. Women's and LGBT+ movements in Commonwealth countries are fighting to rebalance these power dynamics.

Women's and LGBT+ movements both reflect and challenge definitions and experiences of power. As Follett says, "power might be defined as simply the ability to make things happen, to be a causal agent, to initiate change,"¹⁹ and indeed, movements comprise people who "share common perspectives and conscious desires to challenge established policies or power structures over sustained periods of time."²⁰ Movements often strive to disrupt existing norms and power relations by introducing new values and social practices, creating space for the voices, opinions and needs of those who are disenfranchised or marginalised and challenging existing political, ideological, cultural, social or economic structures and those who maintain them.²¹

This requires an in-depth, nuanced understanding of human relationships on an individual, collective and structural level. The process of empowerment can be both personal and collective. Collective action can be focused at a village or neighbourhood level or it can be regional, global or institutional.²² The process of empowerment has been defined by VeneKlasen and Miller²³ as *power-within*, *power-to*, and *power-with*. Power-within centres on the knowledge, individual capabilities, sense of entitlement, self-esteem and self-belief to make changes. Power-with was described by Follett²⁴ as "a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power," and by VeneKlasen and Miller as the "ability to organise with others to enhance the realisation of rights".²⁵ Power-to can include having decision-making power as well as expanding an individual or collective scope of influence.

While movements can be local, regional or global, they can also span history and go through periods of being diminished and ignited. While consciousness and activism have been present for millennia they have been experienced and remembered differently within and across generations and continents. Given that state-centric, patriarchal and cis heteronormative power structures continue to wield influence, much of the history of women's and LGBT+ collective activism and movements have been either deliberately or accidentally wiped from our collective memory.

As a result, new generations often have little understanding of the movements before them. This can lead to tensions between campaigners and their activist predecessors as modern movements develop and evolve.

Attempts by the United Nations (UN) to unify women's activism has had both positive and negative impacts on the global women's movement. In 1975, the World Conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico City and was the first world conference to address the status of women. It was attended by 133 countries. There were subsequent world conferences in Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985, yet it was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that marked a line in the sand in terms of the global women's movement. It was at this conference that LGBT+ rights were also more widely acknowledged. The resulting *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* which was adopted by 189 countries, set strategic objectives for achieving gender equality across 12 key areas. Although it was a real achievement to get the commitment of representatives from the majority of the world, such formal institutional spaces remain dominated by white women from countries with UN influence. This can mean that certain countries or groups are downplayed or side-lined, and it can also obscure the nuances of creative activism by women's and LGBT+ identified people at the grassroots. It has also resulted in the corporatisation of gender equality and women's rights issues as they are taken up by established international NGOs and UN agencies.

2.2 What do we mean by an intergenerational approach to movement building?

Intergenerational movement building is understood in different ways by activists, organisations and movements. At a theoretical level, intergenerational simply means relating to, involving, or affecting several generations.²⁶ However, this can be conceptualised so differently that there can be a schism between how movements theorise the concept of intergenerationality and how it is applied in practice. For both women's and LGBT+ movements, the concept expresses the existence and intersection of a generation of older activists who were involved in previous campaigns and social change, with a new generation of youth activists who are more newly involved in activism.

Data indicates a global community where numbers of young people²⁷ and the population of those aged 65+ have both grown exponentially. In 2017, over half the world's population was aged under 25 or over 60.²⁸ Almost a quarter of the world's population is aged between 10 and 24. This rises to two-thirds of people aged under 25 in some countries,²⁹ while more than 60% of people in Commonwealth countries are under 30 years old.³⁰

Yet, ironically, these demographic trends are not reflected in political representation and decision making. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), for example, youth make up 70% of the population, yet in a survey on political participation of young people in PNG, only 10% felt their voices were being heard in parliament.³¹ Similarly, the average age of African leaders is 66 years old, while the average age of the population is just 25 years old, showing a large gap in youth representation in political and leadership positions.³²

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Young women on the streets in Windhoek, Namibia.

Gaps and misunderstandings across the generations can be accentuated within the context of a movement. For example, in their study of the generational split in the LGBT+ community in the US, Russell and Bohan found that much of the gap is the result of “misunderstandings across a generational divide that is created by developmental, social and historical variables and widened by the rapid pace of change in LGBT+ life.”³³

Activism can highlight the power dynamics between generations. Some of the young feminist activists interviewed for this study explained tensions around who has “power over the definition of being a feminist”.³⁴ According to one study, young Mexican feminist activists reported feeling ranked within their movement because of this.³⁵ Some of the young women felt dismissed by the older generation because their activism did not fit into a pre-existing idea of what it meant to be a feminist.

The desire of older activists to have power over the definition of feminism was also raised in the research: One respondent said: “I see how generations of feminists who are now in their 60s and 70s still define the issues of the women’s movement and still define what is right and what is wrong.” This can lead to different generations within the movement “not having a common understanding” of what they are fighting for.³⁶ The power to name and own the ideology, as well to determine themes and timing of organising, can have a large impact on the legitimacy of the movement. Consequently, recognising and acknowledging these intergenerational power dynamics within movements is key.

In light of this, the acknowledgment of the need for intergenerational discourse has emerged at a national and global level. In 2013, the Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID) Young Feminist Activism Program ran a four day dialogue on the challenges and opportunities presented by multi-generational organising.³⁷ Similarly, in 2015 the UN hosted a day of intergenerational dialogues to explore pathways to gender equality,³⁸ and again in 2017 with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³⁹ The need to include input from across the generational divide has also been adopted into some advocacy and policy movements, such as the Association for Progressive Communication's Feminist Principles of the Internet, which includes a "call for the inclusion of the voices and experiences of young people in the decisions made about safety and security online."⁴⁰ The 2019 Women Deliver conference had a strong focus on youth inclusion, with 18 year old Natasha Wang Mwansa invited to speak at the opening plenary panel alongside older world leaders.⁴¹ Initiatives have also taken place at national and regional levels. For example, in 2017 the Fiji Women's Forum and the Fiji Young Women's Forum held an inaugural national convention to discuss intergenerational approaches to women's political participation.⁴² In May 2019, UN Women in the Caribbean announced a global intergenerational campaign called Generation Equality. The Generation Equality campaign aims to bring together the "next generation of women's rights activists – some of whom may not have been born in 1995", the year of the ground-breaking Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.⁴³

2.3 What is the value of an intergenerational approach?

This section draws on narratives and examples from the women's and LGBT+ activists who participated in the study to highlight the value of intergenerational approaches for movement building. The examples reveal how these approaches contribute to sustainable, powerful movements by, promoting inclusion and connectedness, amplifying younger and older voices that may otherwise not be heard, and helping to build solidarity and collective responsibility.

2.3.1 Promoting inclusion and amplifying marginalised voices

Truly intergenerational movements will be inclusive of all generations and allow the voices of each group to be heard. It is therefore critical to ensure democratic, equitable structures and processes in movements and organisations, and to address any power imbalances. Two research participants spoke about how their organisations are trying to challenge internal hierarchies both internally and more broadly. For example, Y-Fem Trust, a youth-led women's rights organisation with LGBT+ activism in Namibia, is "looking at how we analyse power and address the issues of hierarchy, openness and accountability in feminist organisations". Similarly, in Nepal, multi-generational women's rights organisation LOOM, is working to address power dynamics within the broader women's movement. They select smaller, less well-known partner organisations, whose "efforts aren't as visible and powerful as the other organisations to ensure they're able to break the power hierarchy and move up."⁴⁴

Intergenerational programming allows peer-to-peer directed activities, meaning certain age groups can more easily be heard. For example, in St Lucia, Raise Your Voice works with victims of domestic and sexual abuse, many of whom are children. They realised children “might not want to talk to a woman who is 50 or 60, so [they] thought that having younger people involved was a good way to attract them to come and disclose”.⁴⁵ Similarly, Voice of Africa is running women's empowerment programmes for older women in Botswana and Zimbabwe, and relies on its older members to run the sessions because “the [older women] can't engage with me because they look at me like their child.”⁴⁶ In this way, movements are able to include, and put at ease, a diverse range of ages.

2.3.2 Enabling knowledge and skills sharing

Including a mix of generations in a movement brings a wider range of skills and experience. This can include technical skills, or even wider networks of activists and partners, and experience of good practice in organising.⁴⁷

Several interview participants in the research identified the value of learning from the skills and experiences of others across the generations, which in turn strengthens capacity for both individuals and organisations. When different generations learn from each other, “knowledge and skills can increase threefold or fourfold,” as individuals can then share their learning with others.⁴⁸ Collaboration between generations can have both individual and collective benefits as “people can lean on their own strengths and develop their capacity and improve on their weaknesses”.⁴⁹ As Rita Aciro, Executive Director of the Uganda Women's Network, stated:

“We have women from the 1950s doing things with us and we have the millennials. The older generation give their perspective of how they organised, and then the generation of the 70s and 80s share how they did it ... and the millennials use social media and unconventional means of activism. So, everyone's playing a role and doing their part.”⁵⁰

The contribution from more experienced activists was commonly praised, with participants describing how older members of their movements contribute valuable knowledge and networks that younger activists would otherwise have to “develop from scratch”.⁵¹

Older activists were praised by younger LGBT+ and feminist activists for bringing insight into past successes and failures.⁵² Interacting with older community members can enable younger people to “learn from past mistakes,”⁵³ or to ensure that “we do not reinvent the wheel, or use strategies that were unsuccessful in the past”.⁵⁴ In Nigeria, Stand to End Rape Initiative (STER), a youth-led women's rights organisation, has introduced senior advisors in their 40s and 50s to help with strategy and provide context about the past actions of the women's movement: “The older people are able to say, ‘five years ago this was unattainable and this was the strategy then, so would you mind exploring this?’ It helps us to structure or improve on our current programmes.”⁵⁵ Some organisations also use these different skills between the generations to their advantage, strategically allocating activities based on different skills and networks:

“When we do lobbying and advocacy people see us and ask ‘what age are you?’ Age matters, they listen if the person is older ... we can use the older groups in the lobbying and advocacy sector, and we can use the perspectives from the youth group in mass communications and programmes and events or creating networks. They love to speak with other young people, and they know how to make a good network via social media.”⁵⁶

Young activists in turn can bring fresh ideas as a way to “move movements forward”.⁵⁷ As “youth experts in gender equality and gender processes”,⁵⁸ their specific experience makes their contribution invaluable.

Both older and younger generation activists have different, complementary skills in securing funding for movements. Two research participants – LGBT+ rights organisation in Uganda, and a women’s rights organisation in Nigeria – commented that funding is often more difficult for youth-led organisations to obtain. Four youth-led organisations spoke about how working with older activists had helped them access networks, opportunities or donors. One organisation had received “most of our funding”⁵⁹ with guidance

from their senior advisors, while another found having older activists involved in the organisation opened up networks that were “very beneficial for the organisation to expand and grow.”⁶⁰ The challenges that youth activists have found in fundraising are being addressed by new funders such as FRIDA the Young Feminist Fund.⁶¹ Younger activists also demonstrate innovative ways of reaching audiences at low cost, as the example below from Fiji illustrates.

CASE STUDY

Recruiting on a shoestring



The Women in Fisheries Network facilitates networks and partnerships that enable opportunities for women in sustainable fishing in Fiji and increase women’s participation in industry decision making and management. It has a team of three and limited funding.

Project Officer Joeli Bili joined Women in Fisheries in early 2019 and has been working to increase visibility and membership of the organisation and has found a range of cost-free methods that have allowed Women in Fisheries to access groups of young women who otherwise would not have interacted with the organisation:

1. Accessing youth through pre-existing youth groups: Joeli volunteers with youth groups and through this network was able to access young women who were unaware of the network.
2. Delivering training pro-bono to other groups and organisations: Joeli delivered pro-bono training to the World Wildlife Fund’s (Pacific) young adults volunteer programme to increase the visibility of Women in Fisheries to the young volunteers.
3. Offering unorthodox activities and sessions to interest younger groups: “These young people are colourful, they’re more into something that’s fun and creative. For example, I could take the young women hiking, but I wouldn’t do that with the older women.”

Women in Fisheries has also joined the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network, a non-profit association of NGOs, government departments, academic institutions and communities that are working for sustainable use of marine resources in Fiji. With free membership, Joeli hopes this will be another cost-free way of increasing Women in Fisheries’ visibility and impact.

In the Bahamas, Alicia Wallace's organisation Equality Bahamas runs Women's Wednesdays once a month – an open space where all women are welcome to attend and participate in conversation with a diverse group of expert speakers and other participants. They are organised in partnership with the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas which provides free gallery space. The event is advertised via social media, costing approximately US\$3.00 to \$5.00 each month to boost the post, and when possible, is covered by local media outlets to spread awareness. The event has been successful at bringing a wide range of ages together for little cost: "It was probably 50% people in their 20s and 50% split between 40s, 50s and 60s."⁶²

Different generations of activists approach the work of movements and movement building in diverse yet complimentary ways. In the qualitative interviews it was clear that younger activists are viewed – both by themselves and their older colleagues – as being more dynamic and direct, while the older generation is seen as taking a more measured and strategic approach. For example, Alicia Wallace has observed the different ways the generations interact with her organisation on social media:

"The younger people will share something that we post and say 'this is so fucked up we have to do something about this' and some of the middle-aged women, in their 40s maybe, will re-post something and just put 'interesting' so you don't know what side they're on, and then the more hard-core older feminists will usually re-share and write a caption to say something more substantive that's not necessarily as angry, more 'this is why we need to do the work we're doing'."⁶³

Yet these differing capabilities and enthusiasms for different types of activism can ensure all bases are covered. Each generation can concentrate on accessing different channels of power. As one older generation LGBT+ activist from Uganda said: "If we have boardroom activism the young people say, 'it's boring, it's out of date, it's lousy, we don't want to be part of it.' They want to take to the streets. Whereas we are saying 'we have been through a lot of beatings in the street, our place is now in the boardroom.'"⁶⁴ This duality of methods can help keep older activists in the movement in a way that matches their own skills and enthusiasms, and ensures the movement is able to challenge structures from a variety of pressure points.

2.3.3 Understanding and building on the history of movements

Older activists can play an important role in conveying the history of the movement to younger activists, as well as inspiring them to activism in the first place. A lack of historical understanding of a movement can lead to a lack of continuity, with activists focusing on their own generation and experiences.⁶⁵ Imparting awareness and understanding of the history of the movement is a major benefit to intergenerational dialogue and ensures activists are aware of the successes and failures of their forebearers.

Being aware of the efforts that came before them can help younger activists understand and appreciate the important contributions of previous generations. For many young women, the ideas they have grown up with, both socially and institutionally, were radical at the time of their activist forebearers, and it was these people who fought for and created the framework that young activists may take for granted today.⁶⁶ Youth activist June Eric Udorie warns against "conveniently forget[ting] the many victories they won on our behalf".⁶⁷ In turn, Angela Davis, writing about freedom movements, notes, "radical anti-racist feminists are important in the sense that they have affected the way young people think about social justice struggles today."⁶⁸

Without this history, young women “will not value the importance of the contributions of the previous generations,”⁶⁹ and similarly without history and context young feminists cannot ask “how [did we get] to the place we’re in now?”⁷⁰ The historical legacy of gender-related movements was recognised by two activists who talked about how the structural changes that had been made in the past created the space they were now operating in. One participant, from an LGBT+ organisation in Nepal, described how the past 18 years of the LGBT+ movement in Nepal, including the successful campaign to decriminalise homosexuality, had created “growing visibility and the strength of the LGBTI community in Nepal which has paved the way for current advocacy”.⁷¹

Maintaining the historical narrative of the women’s and LGBT+ movement increases understanding and dialogue between generations.⁷² In Uganda, the Age Project specifically preserves LGBT+ history and was a key benefit to the LGBT+ movement.⁷³ This was supported by Pepe Julian Onziema of SMUG in Uganda. Because of the criminalisation of homosexuality in Uganda, the history of the LGBT+ movement is fragmented. However, Pepe, who has been involved with the movement since the 1990s, has become “like the historian of the movement”.⁷⁴ He believes history is important and the value of history is a lesson he has learnt through his involvement. He feels that this background is a service he can provide as an older member of the community.⁷⁵ Similarly, a Canadian project bringing together different generations of the LGBT+ community through theatre found that an intergenerational approach “helps repair a broken timeline of queer history”.⁷³

Maintaining a historical narrative of movements was important to both younger and older activists. Prominent feminist activist Rosa Namises has been active in the Namibian women’s movement since the 1980s. She identified history as an important part of intergenerational working, as fostering connections between generations “keeps the memory of the organisations much more ongoing”.⁷⁷

Younger feminist activists also expressed a desire to learn the history of their movements through older activists. Maintaining and documenting histories can also provide further benefits for movements, because “documenting the success of the movement and how it benefits women and girls... will energise them to want to join the movement... so documentation is very crucial.”⁷⁸

2.3.4 Creating greater connectedness and forging solidarity and collective responsibility

Movement building can be challenging at both personal and collective levels, and the importance of support and solidarity can often be downplayed. Intergenerational movement building can bolster the inter-personal strength of movements by providing greater connectivity, solidarity and collective responsibility. Appreciation for one another was a theme that emerged strongly in this research. Participants in the Age Project found that “intergenerational dialogue can have many positive effects on a personal level”, including increased solidarity, feeling accepted in yourself and feeling more comfortable to express yourself freely.⁷⁹

Feminist activists have written about the personal and emotional benefits to intergenerational dialogue. Activist Fungai Machirori explains that she finds intergenerational feminism a kind of self-care. By engaging with older activists, Machirori finds “affirmation that the things we care about matter, have always mattered and will continue to matter for a new generation”.⁸⁰ This was repeated by Canadian activist Brigitte DePape, who has said of meeting older activists: “it is reassuring to realise that they have been grappling for years with many of the same dilemmas that I am today.” DePape further adds that it is “inspiring to see the great joy and meaning that older activists continue to derive from their work.”⁸¹

Similarly, in our interviews, Catherine Sealys, President of Raise Your Voice in St Lucia, identified that “when you do this kind of advocacy it’s not easy, you’re dealing with your own personal issues and everybody else’s issues. Some people can handle it and some can’t, so you need to be able to mentor people.”⁸² In these ways, intergenerational dialogue provides personal comfort and connection, as well as community benefits.

Having this personal connection between generations may be of particular importance in the LGBT+ community where it may be harder for the community to find each other.⁸³ During the interviews, Kenita Placide of ECADE identified loneliness and isolation as an issue within the LGBT+ community in the Caribbean that can be aided by building a diverse and inclusive movement. She noted: “We work as a family and in creating a family across waters and borders, it’s something that’s very important because a lot of people live isolated and lonely lives because of a lack of acceptance and understanding.”⁸⁴

Real intergenerational effectiveness comes from the ability of movements to forge a sense of collective responsibility. The importance of the collective over the individual is a message that the US activist Angela Davis frequently repeats. She argues that individuals such as Nelson Mandela were great leaders because of their “critical refusal to embrace the individualism that is such a central ideological component of neoliberalism”.⁸⁵ Davis sees a tendency to think individualistically as a modern threat to movement building, as people “assume that only heroic individuals can make history”.⁸⁶ The value of collective responsibility was highlighted by the activists as being an important part of intergenerational movement building. This was achieved to good effect by focusing around a single unifying issue. For example, in Namibia the women’s movement has had success in campaigns focusing on gender-based violence (GBV) – “an urgent issue that needs to be addressed [...] through intergenerational organising”.⁸⁷

Forging solidarity is another way of effectively bringing the generations together and highlighting togetherness. Participants spoke of collective responsibility as a sense of the movement working together and standing together even when individual interests or opinions diverged. Participants spoke of creating a common vision that would bring together different age groups and identities.⁸⁸ In Nepal, Jyotsna Maskay, Chairperson of LOOM, said that bringing age groups together is about more than just inclusion; it is about “plotting a revolution together”.⁸⁹ Some of the interviewees noted that it is important to recognise and embrace the individuals who make up the collective struggles, understanding that the “personal is political”.⁹⁰ Two participants identified that seemingly theoretical struggles can be made real through an acknowledgement of personal vulnerability: “Relating the personal issues to the political [...] because if you don’t have the personal real-life stories it really lacks substance”.⁹¹

Prioritising the collective not only connects different generations, it can also link seemingly different movements through recognition of the interconnectedness of oppression and activism. Both Raise Your Voice in St Lucia and ECADE felt that the women’s and LGBT+ rights movements were working well together, particularly in areas where there was a collective interest “because the vision for gender equality is the same [between the two movements] we do a lot of work together.”⁹²

3 Barriers and challenges to intergenerational movement building

3.1 Historical contexts

3.1.1 Feminist waves

The concept of waves of feminist or women's movements – referring to historical struggles over particular issues by movements – is often used to describe their progress over time.

Yet, critics have noted that the idea of movement waves is Western-centric, failing to accurately describe the experiences of feminists in non-Western and/or previously colonised countries. For example, the struggle for independence against colonial powers was often a key historical marker for feminist movements in Commonwealth countries. African women's movements often had their origin in independence struggles and became especially visible in the 1990s when a new emphasis on political participation and advocacy emerged.⁹³ Notably, not a single participant in this research spoke of waves during the qualitative interviews.

Nevertheless, several activists from women's movements raised the issue of division within their movements. In Namibia one interviewee, Rosa Namises, has been involved in the women's movement since the 1980s and described the history of fragmentation and distrust that has been present in the movement since its early days when the powerful South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) instructed the women's movement to stop organising:

"This instruction I knew was to cut the strength of independent women, it was a male patriarchal programme supported by the Women Council of SWAPO as the party never was interested in the empowerment of women."⁹⁴

Although her organisation Women Solidarity Namibia seeks to work collectively to rebuild the women's movement, Rosa said she was concerned that the women's movement in Namibia is "fragmented too badly"⁹⁵ to mean it is truly inclusive. Similarly, generational gaps emerged in the history of the Sudanese women's movement. The Sudanese Women's Union, created in 1951, made credible gains in women's political participation from 1986 to 1989, with increased representation of women in the top positions of some political parties and key ministries. However, it also created some antipathy within the younger generation, who were unhappy because of its increasingly conservative leadership. As such, the movement "lost [its] vision and grew out of touch [...] the youth did not identify with the movement because of their dinosauric attitudes. They did not manage to bridge the generations."⁹⁶

Conversely, a perceived lack of history can have a negative impact on how activists organise. This was particularly felt in the Caribbean, with feminist activists from both St Lucia and the Bahamas raising the point. For example, Alicia Wallace of Equality Bahamas hesitated to even classify her work as a movement at this point in time:

"It's kind of difficult to call it a movement because we don't have a bunch of organisations, but there's feminist activity in the country for the first time since DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) was active in the region [in the 1990s]."⁹⁷

Similarly, Catherine Sealys of Raise Your Voice, also in the Caribbean, noted that the women's movement in St Lucia does not have an established history of women's organising: "I didn't get it from anybody, my mother is very introverted". She said, "we learn from Europe, the UK, the US." Because of this, Raise Your Voice is keen to communicate what they are doing to the next generation: "I think it's time we change that now, it may not be our children, but it may be the younger people coming up."⁹⁸

3.1.2 Colonial legacy

The lack of a known history of feminist and gender equality activism is part of, and results from, the legacy of British colonialism. The importance of the history of the 'mother country' was imposed on Commonwealth countries, simultaneously erasing and debasing the pre-colonial past, and creating new legal, socio-cultural and political structures that glorified British history and values, and imposed a Victorian Christian morality. Within this context, activism of any kind was more likely to be defined as anti-colonial and therefore dismissed, repressed and belittled.

In many pre-colonial Commonwealth countries, more fluid gender identities were accepted as normal. In what is today known as Uganda, opinions on same-sex relationships appear to have been far more liberal than they are today. King Mwanga II of Buganda (now Uganda) was openly bisexual, and among the Lango people certain men, called *mudoko dako*, were believed to form a third gender alongside males and females. Among the Nnobi in Nigeria, biological sex did not always correspond to binary ideas of male and female gender norms, meaning women could more easily undertake roles typically associated with men or be classified as males, and the Igbo language was not rigid in its articulation of gender allowing daughters to be considered male without implying that they were man-like.⁹⁹ Among the Nandi of Kenya, women who had not been able to bear a son could pay bride wealth for, and marry a woman to bear children for her and continue her family line.¹⁰⁰

Colonial rule both created new and reinforced existing patriarchal structures. Western culture and Christian religion brought rigid gender ideologies and supported the gender imbalances in government and the church.

For the Nnobi in Nigeria, this supplanted the previous goddess-focused religion, robbing women of their ideological and practical status.¹⁰¹ State schools enrolled more boys than girls at the primary level, a discrimination that then extended into secondary, higher and further education. Similarly, colonial administrations concentrated local government and court power in male warrant chiefs, court clerks and court messengers.¹⁰²

The imposition of British discriminatory legal structures, codes and processes on colonised countries had the effect of normalising and reinforcing prejudice against LGBT+ people and women in many places. In India, dangerous specific precedents were set when the 1860 Indian Penal Code was introduced which criminalised consensual same-sex acts (Section 377) and made exemption from law for marital rape (Section 375). While Section 377 was recently ruled unconstitutional after a lengthy series of court battles, Section 375 remains in the penal code.¹⁰³

The legacy of British colonial legislation stretches into the present for many Commonwealth countries, leading LGBT+ activists to fight against long-established and state-sanctioned discrimination. In India in 1992, activists protested against the infamous anti-sodomy law, Section 377 of the penal code, a provision which had been frequently employed by the police to harass the LGBT+ community.¹⁰⁴ Some countries have gone further, amending homophobic colonial-era legislation to increase penalties or broaden the law's scope to cause harm. In 2000, Uganda's Penal Code Amendment (Gender References) Act changed the relevant sections of the penal code to refer to "any person" instead of "any male" to ensure that lesbian acts were also criminalised. This was part of a pattern of amendments to male-only, same-sex sexual acts provisions in former British colonies to criminalise same-sex intimacy between women, and was undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago (1986), Solomon Islands (1990), Barbados (1992), Sri Lanka (1995), Botswana (1998), Malaysia (1998), The Gambia (2005), Zambia (2005) and Malawi (2011).¹⁰⁵

A harsh anti-homosexuality bill was subsequently introduced in Uganda, institutionalising the death penalty for gay and lesbian sexual relations, banning LGBT+ groups and forcing families to report gay relatives. This law was passed with modifications in 2014, and while LGBT+ activists successfully petitioned the Constitutional Court of Uganda to rule it invalid, there are still those who wish to revive the law. Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which purported to criminalise same-sex marriage despite it never having been legal in the first place, was introduced in 2014. It went much further, criminalising the cohabitation of same-sex couples, banning public displays of same-sex affection and imposing 10-year prison sentences on those who operate or support gay clubs, societies or organisations.¹⁰⁶

Today, 35 Commonwealth jurisdictions (34 full member states, plus the Cook Islands) have laws that criminalise consensual, same-sex sexual activity between adults.¹⁰⁷ In countries where same-sex conduct is still criminalised, our research found that fear of criminalisation and backlash can have an impact on how people become involved in the LGBT+ movement.¹⁰⁸ Criminalisation in many countries resulted in organisations being denied the ability to register, which hampered their organising capacity, legitimacy and ability to access funds. In Uganda, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, activists noted that LGBT+ criminalisation affects freedom of assembly rights and association.¹⁰⁹

3.2 Cultural and socio-economic contexts

3.2.1 Legal and political challenges

A variety of legal, political and social challenges which impeded intergenerational approaches were faced by the women's and LGBT+ activists interviewed for the study.

Discriminatory legislation posed a particular challenge. Legal contexts are particularly difficult in countries where same-sex conduct or relationships are still criminalised. Several participants highlighted discriminatory laws that stem from colonialism, including in the Caribbean, Uganda and Namibia. In Uganda, the penal code, and the civil code in St Lucia was cited.¹¹⁰ Even where laws and policies had been introduced to protect the rights of LGBT+ people and women, many participants noted that the implementation of this legislation was poor:

*"There are gaps in implementation, including resourcing for implementation, financial resources, adherence to the provisions and knowledge about the laws by the rights holders. The duty bearers don't know they have a responsibility to protect the rights of people and do it diligently."*¹¹¹

A repressive political and social context where LGBT+ individuals live in fear of persecution and discrimination can impede the development of movements. For example, in Jamaica, the Gay Freedom Movement began in the late 1970s, although the legal reform movement did not emerge until the late 1990s when the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) was established.¹¹² By 2010, J-FLAG felt able to hold public events, bringing LGBT+ individuals together and giving them space to connect and celebrate their sexuality, as well as hosting private events to provide a safe space where LGBT+ Jamaicans can meet. However, LGBT+ organisers in Jamaica must always "strike a balance between visibility and safety".¹¹³ This point was also raised during the interviews with activists, with Kenita Placide of ECADE explaining:

*"In Jamaica they're considered to be the most homophobic [in the Caribbean], but there's gay parties, but it's a small connected community, it's about who you know so you can be invited. You can't just blast it out on social media for the safety of people who attend."*¹¹⁴

Indeed, in countries where LGBT+ visibility is low there appears to be less intergenerational dialogue and increased isolation for young and elderly LGBT+ people.

The commitment and sacrifice required to be part of a movement, particularly one that could compromise one's safety and wellbeing, is challenging for all age groups, however some may be more willing, or able, to take the risks than others. The difficulties of organising in hostile political environments was a common theme in the research, raised by almost half of the participants of the study. In some contexts, political factors discouraged people from joining movements. In Fiji, for example, "everything is militarised from the highest level."¹¹⁵ Dangerous environments were particularly seen as discouraging younger people from becoming involved, as Catherine Sealys from Raise Your Voice in St Lucia explained at a recent meeting:

"Somebody made a joke that it's only women in their 50s who do advocacy in St Lucia because they're retired so they feel there's nothing to lose."¹¹⁶

However, in Uganda, the risk of violence or backlash can deter both younger and older activists from the frontline:

"The young people and the older people, some don't want to be in the frontline [...] they don't want to face violence, others probably don't want to be seen talking about certain political issues as they will be punished by their parties."¹¹⁷

In Nepal, LGBT rights organisation Mitini Nepal is highly aware of the risk: "The major concern is safety for the frontline defenders, they're so visible in the frontline space so we need to plan for them."¹¹⁸

3.2.2 Cultural and religious challenges

In some cases, older generations of LGBT+ activists may find it more difficult to be open about their sexual identities than those who are younger. This is likely to be part of a broader increased social awareness and acceptance of LGBT+ rights. LGBT+ youth often have very different experiences from their elders in some Commonwealth countries, such as being supported rather than rejected by friends and family.¹¹⁹ Young LGBT+ people may not understand the extent of trauma inflicted by having to 'pass' – when LGBT+ people present themselves to the world as heterosexual to avoid stigma and targeted abuse.¹²⁰ Sarita K.C., Executive Director of Mitini Nepal, identified a generational difference in response to broader social acceptance. In Nepal, Sarita has observed that:

"The younger groups want to open up, the elder group they still feel so hesitant to open up, to talk about their sexual orientation with their family. The younger group they're more open with their families and with society and also in social media, they have the power of how to speak and open up."¹²¹

Similarly, in Uganda, Pepe Julian Onziema of Sexual Minorities Uganda explained a phenomenon that is limiting the number of older LGBT+ people participating in the LGBT+ community:

"When people are 40 or 45 they withdraw from the movement and they get into heterosexual relationships because they don't want to be alone and they can't marry who they want, and then they live the rest of their lives as heterosexuals, and then that takes away from the movement because we don't have them."¹²²

For Pepe's generation, there is a lack of older LGBT+ activists, as the social attitude to expressing homosexuality has changed between generations:

“The generation before me, that generation is struggling to understand my generation. They are aware that homosexuality existed, for them it existed but there was no need to talk about it. Whereas my generation is saying ‘we don’t want to be prosecuted and we want to challenge it’.”¹²³

As with the women’s movement, this change suggests that although young people experience greater social freedoms due to the activism of previous generations, they do not always recognise and understand the difficulties of the older generations before them. Younger activists, distanced from the past, may also feel that older LGBT+ activists are too focused on issues that are no longer important.¹²⁴

In areas where there is low LGBT+ visibility, there is a risk of isolation for all LGBT+ generations. For example, older people report being excluded from community spaces, particularly in the LGBT+ community.¹²⁵ Mitini Nepal, a Nepali LGBT rights organisation, has experienced this with the city/rural divide:

“It’s still a huge group of people who still don’t know about the terminology of LGBTI: the spectrum of LGBTI. In Kathmandu it will be easier because most people here are educated, but in rural areas it’s really difficult [...] outside Kathmandu there are so many people who don’t know the spectrum of the LGBTI community [...] they don’t know the rights that are included in the Constitution and the laws and policy that have been given to us.”¹²⁶

Religious attitudes were raised as challenges to women’s and LGBT+ movements by activists in the Caribbean, Nigeria, Botswana and Zimbabwe. For ECADE, conservative religious norms were viewed as a greater barrier to LGBT+ rights than the existence of discriminatory laws. According to Kenita Placide: “Although those laws exist and sometimes the police and other people try to use them, the bigger and most impactful issue is really that of the church and the way they talk about homosexuality being an abomination.”¹²⁷ Similarly, in Nigeria, STER has found that religion can impact on how the women’s movement works together:

“We do work together on issues where our interests come together [...] for general issues like domestic violence, rape, maternal mortality, there’s common values and collaborating efforts. When it comes to LGBTQI, safe abortion and contraceptive needs, it’s a bit different because of the religion.”¹²⁸

Similarly, in the Namibian women’s movement, Rosa Namises noted that if a movement’s activity is “not religious [...] then elders will not participate”.¹²⁹ However, in Botswana and Zimbabwe, women’s rights organisation Voice of Africa has also been able to use religion as an avenue for social change: “Most of our older women are in church, so it’s more of a religious programme.”¹³⁰

Participants also raised challenges relating to cultural expectations or norms that affect the willingness of people of all ages to become involved in movements, particularly the women’s movement. Patriarchal social structures can disempower women from being active members of their communities. In Nepal, expectations about respect for elders can similarly discourage young people from participating in gender-relevant movements:

“Because of our socialisation, when we were young we were told not to speak loudly in front of our seniors, not to challenge their views and ideas [...] so when different generations are together the very outspoken group is of a higher age.”¹³¹

Additionally, some LGBT+ community spaces are reported to be age-segregated, with little opportunity for different generations to connect. This lack of intergenerational connection may be particularly pronounced for those ostracised from family units, which is where most people’s intergenerational relationships are established.¹³² While this is a particular challenge for LGBT+ movements, it is also a reason why intergenerational approaches are especially important as a means to provide mentorship and support.¹³³

Nevertheless, fears of intergenerational abuse were raised by participants as a barrier to creating such connections. For example, Kenita Placide explained that ECADE has considered running a big brothers and big sisters programme in the past to connect young LGBT+ people with more established members of the community:

"It's something we've always wanted to do but it's impossible because how can I match somebody older to work with someone young if they'll think that person's a paedophile or a threat?"¹³⁴

In turn, ECADE hosts a Caribbean Women and Sexual Diversity Conference and has received applications from young people aged 16 or 17. However, the legal implications of involving young people mean they are not permitted to participate. Kenita acknowledges that this creates "a gap in dealing with teenagers and what that does to them in terms of accessing spaces and being involved or even educated".¹³⁵

3.2.3 Linking gender-based activism with global challenges

Activists from both Fiji and Nepal identified climate change as an issue having an impact on how the women's movement organises:

"Climate change is real and it's impacting our food security, forcing people to evacuate from their homes, and also affecting the way a household organises itself. It's not just environmental change, or physical change, it's way more than that. It plays an important factor in the way we [Women in Fisheries] organise ourselves and the way women organise themselves."¹³⁶

In one interview with Mitini Nepal, migration was identified as a challenge in bringing young people into Nepal's LGBT+ movement: "Most young people plan to go away to work, migration it a major thing." This affects the capacity of Mitini Nepal to recruit younger members, as many young people who become involved may only stay for six months or one year which affects the sustainability of the organisation.¹³⁷

3.3 Hegemonic seniority and tokenism

Hierarchies within movements can create structures that implicitly and explicitly either include or exclude certain generations. In 2013, following AWID's online intergenerational dialogue,¹³⁸ it was found that the younger activists were resentful of hegemonic seniority, where some older activists exclude, and are condescending towards, younger activists.¹³⁹ Movements with rigid, top-down leadership can not only stifle younger activists they can also do a disservice to older generations by limiting their capacity to both share and receive learning. Youth activism within feminism can also be dismissive of older women with "the voices of older women not being heard by younger women in the movement".¹⁴⁰

Concerns about intra-movement hierarchies were reflected in the qualitative research with almost half of the participants addressing it as an obstacle to intergenerational working. The Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) leadership positions are elected by the network's members who are all within the 18-30 youth bracket. However, even in a youth context, hierarchies can establish themselves based on assumptions about age and experience:

"Perspectives of leadership are often assumed by achievement not quality, and people who are able to articulate their competencies tend to be the people who have been in the game a lot longer. So, it's not surprising that the leaders are the ones who are on the older side of the youth bracket."¹⁴¹

A key challenge with intergenerational movement building is ensuring that it is genuine and meaningful. Superficial, tokenistic gestures of inclusion are of particular concern to young activists and threaten to undermine the legitimacy of intergenerational organising. Both young and older activists participating in the study noted that tokenism was common in women's and LGBT+ organising.

One youth activist said “whenever we’d get invited to programmes they encouraged us to speak but then our voices, and what we had suggested, was not incorporated in their reports or their programmes.”¹⁴² Another youth activist explained: “it’s really disheartening” to merely be treated as a token young person, as “we have numerous young people in Nigeria who are doing amazing global work in terms of women’s rights and the movement but their voices are not fully incorporated in the conversation.”¹⁴³

For younger activists, tokenistic inclusion can often go hand in hand with patronising or condescending behaviour from older activists. One young activist was frustrated:

“I don’t need someone else telling me that [we’re capable] or knowing that we’re going to get praised because we’re young [...] for any sort of youth-oriented programme, if you’re good at what you do and you have a public profile you’re going to get lauded because you’re young.”¹⁴⁴

Younger activists felt their leadership capacity was dismissed at times because of their age. In two interviews with young feminist activists, younger women felt that older feminists treated them as if “it’s not our time yet to be leaders.”¹⁴⁵

At Women Deliver 2019, African Union Youth Envoy Aya Chebbi argued that “we need more young people in leadership but also we need intergenerational dialogue.” Chebbi emphasised that rather than focusing on “passing the torch,” current leadership needs to be willing to engage in “co-leadership.”¹⁴⁶ The tendency of adults to dismiss children and teens as the future was also raised in the academic literature, with young activists feeling that adults often disregarded their capacity to create impact in the present.¹⁴⁷ Speaking at Women Deliver 2019, Wang Mwansa rejected the idea that young people should be grateful for receiving programmes they have no part in designing: “There is no way anything is going to be done for us without us, because that’s just doing it against us.”¹⁴⁸

Young people from the Commonwealth South Pacific engage in intergenerational dialogue with parliamentarians.



Yet, frustration was not only expressed by youth activists. Several older interviewees were highly critical of tokenistic practice, viewing it as a barrier to meaningful cooperation. As one said, “Just bringing young women and girls into the room doesn’t mean they’re meaningfully participating.”¹⁴⁹

Additionally, activists from countries including Fiji, Botswana, Nepal and the Bahamas raised the issue of older activists not understanding or respecting the more inclusive approach of younger generations. In Fiji “a trans woman in a room might not be taken very seriously by older women in that space.”¹⁵⁰ In Nepal “let’s say there’s a 60-year-old women’s rights activist and there is a sex worker who is a women’s rights activist. So [the older activist] may say certain things like ‘can sex workers be part of the women’s rights movement?’”¹⁵¹ Such challenges also point to ways of improving the wider inclusivity of movements by increasing the intergenerationality of movements.

4 Good practices in intergenerational movement building

When the barriers to intergenerational movement building can be overcome, activists and community members report significant benefits at both a personal and movement level. In order to improve intergenerational movement building it is important to apply or adapt the following principles throughout the building of a movement, as well as using certain methods and practices at particular points during a movement's lifecycle.

4.1 Intergenerational principles

4.1.1 Meaningful engagement

Meaningful intergenerational engagement is a key principle within intergenerational movement building.

The majority of the interview participants (10 out of 16) said that a key factor in meaningful intergenerational organising was the presence of cross-generational learning. Participants described this variously as an exchange¹⁵² and reciprocity.¹⁵³ This means working not in a linear top-down or bottom-up way but working collaboratively across the generations. One activist described this as establishing a place to:

“collectively learn from one another, express ourselves and really be co-creators of the feminist spaces we're trying to create.”¹⁵⁴

While participants described learning going in all directions, there was a particular emphasis on ensuring that older activists were willing to learn from younger activists as “older people are still falling into the pattern of lecturing to younger people without there being a fair exchange of ideas.”¹⁵⁵ Intergenerational learning must “go in both (or more) directions” and must be “mutual and non-hierarchical”.¹⁵⁶

In order for this cross-generational learning to take place, all generations involved must first identify, and then set aside, their prejudices. Participants acknowledged that representatives of all generations can inadvertently bring prejudice and biases to intergenerational working. As Jacob Thomas of CYGEN put it: “If you have a brain you have a bias.”¹⁵⁷

In order to challenge biases, a number of conditions should be put in place. First, as Dr Loubna Skalli-Hanna explained, “an enabling environment [needs to be created] where generations can effectively relinquish their prejudices and misconceptions about each other to mobilise around common goals that benefit all. The environment should also foster the logic of partnership built on mutual trust and recognition rather than paternalism and mutual distrust”.¹⁵⁸ Mpho Mphofu from Voice of Africa recommends finding common ground that the generations can find and build on together.¹⁵⁹ As one activist said, “there's threat and protection because I don't want to get hurt”, yet “to connect with people I need to challenge my own bias.”¹⁶⁰ Unless all generations are willing to acknowledge and confront their prejudices, it will be difficult to form meaningful relationships.

Empathy for the different needs and expectations of each generation also aids meaningful engagement. For example, within the Fiji Women's Rights Movement the following is recommended in order to meaningfully engage with younger generations of activists:

“Find out what the needs of your constituency are before starting any programme. You might think you know what issues young women are facing, what their needs are. But sometimes we are not addressing their needs [...] There is no one-size fits all programme, you need to have flexibility in order to meet the needs of different audiences.”¹⁶¹

CASE STUDY

Increasing structural intersectionality



The Voice of Africa is a youth-led women's rights organisation that works in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Founded by Mpho Mpofo in 2014 with the initial aim of improving education for girls, over the last five years it has grown to encompass a broad range of women's rights programming and advocacy. Mpho established Voice of Africa as a youth-led organisation because the organisation addresses young people's issues. However, the organisation also has a small group of mentors aged over 40 who sit on the board and advise on Voice of Africa's direction and strategy.

These mentors have been on Voice of Africa's board since the beginning of the organisation, and Mpho found that as Voice of Africa began exploring different challenges facing different groups of women and girls, there were times when the older members demonstrated less progressive attitudes to intersectional women's issues than the younger leadership team. This challenge arose when Voice of Africa wanted to become involved in an LGBT+ campaign in Botswana. Some volunteers are also members

of the LGBT+ community and wanted to see the women's movement working alongside the LGBT+ movement. However, there was hesitance among the mentors to become involved in this space and they questioned why Voice of Africa should engage in the area.

Mpho felt that not becoming involved in the LGBT+ campaign would be "failing the volunteers that want to engage", so she decided to progress with the work despite the board's more conservative approach. Nevertheless, instead of dismissing the older members or avoiding the issue, Voice of Africa has "moved into a learning phase" with their older mentors to introduce a greater understanding of the intersectionality of the women's movement.

"If we're going to be an organisation that's pushing human rights we can't be selective on what we support [...] it's about us educating them and having them be part of the whole programmes that we're doing and realising that what we're doing isn't actually deviating from the mission of the organisation."

Mpho is glad that Voice of Africa has made the effort to continue working with their mentors and recommends that other youth-led movements do the same.

"Young people should not be deterred by their age and conservatism because if we'd stopped, we never would have had progress. We have to say: 'as much as we are learning from you, you guys have to learn from us.' Once we all understand that it's easier to work together."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement also highlights the importance of capacity strengthening by coming from a perspective where existing skills and experience are acknowledged. They advised asking the question: "What other tools do you need in your weave basket in order to function as a woman leader?" This advice was echoed by Florence Khaxas of Y-Fem Trust:

"There are a lot of tokenistic behaviours between different age groups whereby sometimes the elder generations of movement builders don't quite take the time to understand how young people are organising themselves or how issues are different to the ones they were facing to the ones the younger generation is fighting for."¹⁶¹

Coming from the assumption that each generation can bring something important to the table helps to keep engagement genuine, reciprocal and meaningful.

4.1.2 Intersectionality and intergenerationality

Movements should not only seek to be intergenerational, they must be more broadly intersectional within, and among, the generations. As Florence Khaxas of Y-Fem Namibia said:

"I have realised that humanity, compassion and community care are the driving forces around forging solidarity within diverse movements. We need to actively practice non-judgment as a means of reflecting on privilege and power by actively critiquing how patriarchy impacts us in our intersectional approaches."¹⁶⁴

Alicia Wallace of Equality Bahamas further emphasised the need for ongoing self-critique:

"Actively think about how to create access for people and then when you're in that space you've created, look around and don't just pat yourself on the back for who you see in the room, but who's not in the room? And why are they missing?"¹⁶⁵

Recognising the intersection of multiple identities and oppression all help foster meaningful intergenerational dialogues. Many activists suffer intersecting forms of oppression, and therefore will not always find a common experience with other activists within a particular movement. For some people involved in the women's and LGBT+ movements, age is not the only aspect of their identity that they must navigate within activist spaces. For many activists, the intersection of factors such as sexual orientation, race, disability and religion must also be considered.

In these cases, other intersecting identities such as race and class can influence whether young activists and communities feel connected to, or excluded from, the movements that came before them. As one youth activist said: "Every generation is born into a new space"¹⁶⁶ and the movement must learn to adapt to new norms and perspectives.

4.1.3 Appreciation of experience and perspective

The contribution and skills of each generation must be acknowledged, appreciated and respected in order to aid intergenerational movement building. Feeling sidelined and unappreciated can be an issue for both youth activists and older activists. Rita Acira, Executive Director of the Uganda Women's Network, noted that: "Acknowledging [different age group's] contributions and attributing their success to them" is crucial when bringing different age groups together.¹⁶⁷ One way of achieving this is by building on, and sharing, skills between each generation. For example, two activists from non-youth-led movements made the point that young people's technological skills could be shared with older activists, while older activists can share their knowledge and experience:

“Remember in the olden times, [the older generation] were so capable in taking the movement forward. With the new generation of young activists together with the advancement in technology, the intergenerational movement should see the blending together of the older and the younger generations in order for the movements to be meaningful and effective. So, having the younger ones observing the meetings of the village leaders [elders] [is really valuable].”¹⁶⁸

Another example was addressing the question of how to reach people who do not have the internet. Alicia Wallace of Equality Bahamas said: “What better way to find that out than to ask the people who were organising before the internet?”¹⁶⁹ Pepe Julian Onziema of Sexual Minorities Uganda agreed that younger people’s technological skills were beneficial to the movement and highlighted the importance of learning lessons from older organisers.¹⁷⁰

Many younger activists raised the need to ensure “nothing about us without us”, meaning that programmes for a group should be shaped by that group. Movements should recognise that individuals are experts in their own lives and experiences, and meaningfully include beneficiaries in shaping and delivering programmes:

“If you’re developing a programme for an age group and you don’t have that age group as part of the analysis of the problem and coming up with the solution then you’re bound to fail. If you’re not bringing these people to the table how do you identify the problem? How do you understand the problem? And how do you come up with a solution that will work for them? So, the main thing is identifying your target audience and then what is their role in the development of the programme and implementation? Because something that is being run by the people who are affected by the issue has a higher chance of being successful.”¹⁷¹

4.1.4 Respecting cultural and communication preferences

Younger and older activists need to be willing and open to talking about their issues and perspectives with one another. To do this, there may need to be some initial work to facilitate a shift away from any feelings of distrust between the generations and acknowledge that these issues go both up and down the generations. With a willingness to be open and trusting, generations can pave the way for constructive dialogue.

In order to achieve effective communication, practical issues must also be taken into account, and differences must be acknowledged. Preferred methods of communication for and between younger and older activists may vary. The younger generation may be more active in using technologies such as social media than their older colleagues. While these practicalities may seem minor, they can make a significant difference in the capacity of different groups to meaningfully participate in intergenerational dialogues and movements.¹⁷² Women in Fisheries in Fiji shared their learning about responsive and inclusive communication:

“In all our communications, one of our guiding principles is do no harm. In whatever work we do we have to be careful of how we work and contextualise communications.”¹⁷³

Effective intergenerational communication must also be accessible and transparent to avoid alienating activists. In terms of being intergenerational, communication styles often “need to be adapted between different age groups ... communicating [your message] in a very different format so people are able to adapt”.¹⁷⁴ For some activists this difference was primarily in the method of communication, for example, using social media versus radio or community links,¹⁷⁵ while others felt the substance of messaging and approach also had to be adapted. Pushpa Joshi of LOOM in Nepal talked about being invited to events as a youth activist where there was “a lot of civil society jargon”. Pushpa felt this made the spaces “not youth friendly”.¹⁷⁶

CASE STUDY

Personal relationships ease the generational divide

Equality Bahamas is a women's rights organisation established by Alicia Wallace in 2014 in response to a 'joke' made by a member of parliament about domestic violence. Equality Bahamas' mission is to:

- educate the general public on issues of gender, sexuality and intersection of identity
- empower women and girls through responsive programming
- engage the community in conversation, strategic planning and policy development processes; and
- equality for all.

Alicia hesitates to call her work part of a women's movement because Equality Bahamas is the only organisation in the Bahamas focused specifically on gender and sexuality rights with an emphasis on women's rights as human rights. Other organisations are primarily focused on service delivery. Instead, Alicia frames their work as part of feminist activity happening in the Bahamas.

Thirty three year old Alicia has been the Director of Equality Bahamas since its inception. It is a youth-led organisation, with a small team made up of people under 35 years of age. However, Equality Bahamas also has support from a small group of older women. These women are excited to see feminist activity happening in the country and take a support and advisory role within the organisation.

Across the Caribbean, Alicia has seen a "mega generational divide within the region". However, Equality Bahamas has not experienced the fissures common between the generations in the broader Caribbean women's movement. Alicia believes this is because of the small and intimate nature of Equality Bahamas' team, and a collective responsibility for their goals:

"We're such a small group there isn't really room for segmentation, we're all women and we all live in the Bahamas and we all care about these issues and for the most part we agree on the issues. So there isn't much room to separate who is older."

Having a smaller team has allowed individuals to develop strong connections and build mutual trust and respect that fosters open intergenerational dialogue:

"I've built personal relationships with the women that I work with. Our age doesn't really come up and there's a tremendous amount of mutual respect. They respect the work that I'm doing and I respect the work that they have done and the perspectives they bring. We're willing to ask each other questions, we're willing to challenge each other's positions. There haven't been many disagreements but when there have been, it's been very respectful: 'I don't agree with you and this is why'. Being able to have that conversation, it's also a benefit of being in a smaller place."

Movements need to be cognisant of, and responsive to, cultural or community standards regarding respect for elders when communicating intergenerational messages. In Botswana and Zimbabwe, Mpho Mpofu found that it is necessary to “beat around the bush to be heard” by older women when she speaks about the women’s rights movement. Mpho has found that when she is more direct in her messaging, her elders may say: “You don’t understand culture, or you don’t understand tradition.”¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Mitini Nepal, an LGBTI rights organisation, has found that in bringing different generations of activists together there can be different expectations regarding respect when the younger activists communicate with their elders:

“The older ones always expect the respect and they always want it. The younger ones just say, ‘Hi, who are you? But the older ones think ‘we are the senior ones so they shouldn’t just come and ask us for these things’, but the younger group don’t want to do this kind of thing.”¹⁷⁸

In dealing with these different styles, youth activists were asked to demonstrate traditional forms of respect to their elders when communicating with them. Efforts were made to explain to the younger group why this respect was warranted and beneficial: “We said: ‘these are the elders, they have huge experience so you have to respect them. If you have problems in your local area, they are the ones who will speak for you, who will help you, who will teach you how to do advocacy and guide you in how to tackle problems.’”¹⁷⁹

4.1.5 Expanding individual and familial as well as collective power

Creating and expanding intergenerational collective power requires building trusting personal relationships and connections. In Namibia, Florence Khaxas of Y-Fem Trust explained that developing intergenerational movements and programmes in the community:

“requires trust, sisterhood and solidarity as feminists, and in the community it is a journey that is not perfect. We need to actively seek personal development, setting healthy goals and most importantly investing in our health by seeking healthy ways of organising that promotes collective care culture by building mutually respectful relationships across generations. At Y-Fem, mentorship and coaching is a very important strategy of movement building, we always seek innovative ways to organise across generations to learn from each other as women’s human rights defenders.”¹⁸⁰

Bringing families into movement building is a useful way of encouraging intergenerational thinking and cooperation, as families are often the forum in which most people have intergenerational relationships. Voice of Africa built on family relationships to assist in their campaign against child marriage in Zimbabwe. The programme does not try to bring the parents and children together straight away, it first holds separate sessions for children and parents to allow Voice of Africa to learn from each group. These learnings are shared with the other group so the parents hear what their children had to say and vice versa. The idea of having conversations together is then introduced: “We say you’re going to have a conversation together, is that something you’re comfortable with?” It often takes time before parents and children are willing to come together, sometimes up to three months. However, Voice of Africa has found that since bringing the generations together “we actually saw great impact compared to when we were addressing it with just one generation.”¹⁸¹

Using existing familial connections can increase intergenerational dialogue and relationships within movements. In the Namibian women's movement, older female family members provided vital support for young activists: "We work with our mothers [...] who are quite supportive of the work we do as young feminists and attending our campaigns and inviting other older women to attend our campaigns."¹⁸² However, activists warned that social and cultural norms within families can also create barriers for intergenerational working.

Members of Women LEAD, a youth-led organisation that empowers young women to be leaders in their communities, explained:

"We're encouraging young people to have a voice which they are able to express in the public sphere or in their communities, but when they go back to their homes they often find it difficult to challenge patriarchal norms and feel disempowered."¹⁸³

Similarly, in the Ugandan LGBT+ movement, conservatism from older, non-LGBT+ family members against same sex relationships was seen as sometimes having a negative impact on the self-perceptions of young LGBT+ people.¹⁸⁴

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4.2 Ensuring systems are intergenerational

Intergenerational approaches are often critical to ensuring sustainability of movements across lifetimes and therefore should be a consideration at all stages of a movement's life cycle. This section focuses on robust systems and processes for ensuring intergenerationality and sustainability.

4.2.1 Recruiting new members of different generations

There are a range of methods for creating intergenerational recruitment into movements. These can be broken down into three steps:

1. Decide who you need to bring into your movement. Defining your audience and target group is the first step to understanding how you need to tailor your recruitment methods.
2. Tailor your message to the recipients. Younger people may be more responsive to bolder messaging, while the older generation may want to have a clearer understanding of what they stand to gain through participation. The key thing is not to assume that the same message will be effective across all age groups.
3. Choose communication channels based on your target group. Are you trying to increase youth participation? Explore social media and target the networks that are most commonly used by young people. Are you trying to include more elderly people in your programmes? Consider approaching respected community figures and bring them on board with your aims, then ask them to act as advocates in their communities.

Overall, there is a need to adapt recruiting styles to fit the group being recruited. STIR, a youth-led feminist organisation in Nigeria, approaches younger and older women differently because they are seeking different outcomes: "With the younger women it's more participatory, with the older it's more of strategic guidance on programme development and brand alignment to her objectives."¹⁸⁵ Similarly, LOOM in Nepal focuses more on "building capacity as leaders and advocacy" when recruiting younger women into the movement, and on "setting up strategy and investing in next generation leaders" when recruiting more established women.¹⁸⁶

Other activists spoke about the benefits of word-of-mouth recruitment, both with younger and older women in their communities. Women LEAD runs a young women's empowerment programme in Nepal and offers internships to participants once the programme is complete. The interns then lead on the recruitment strategy for the new cohort "because they know what our target market is looking for so they're the best people to recruit".¹⁸⁷

The young women recruit their peers through social media and presentations in schools about their own experiences on the programme. In Namibia, Y-Fem Trust also utilises community-level recruitment when working in rural areas:

*"Especially when we work in the rural communities, the only way we can have the support is to organise with older women because they are the ones who are always there to help us identify young women in the community settings."*¹⁸⁸

The older women also invite their peers and spread information about Y-Fem Trust across the generations. Alicia Wallace of Equality Bahamas also stressed that for recruitment to be effective, movements need to be creating spaces in which people want to be actively involved:

“The intention needs to be more focused on the design of the space and the opportunity than on the activity itself. So less focused on specifically inviting older people and younger people and telling them how to make each other comfortable, and more focused on designing a space people will want to come to, and when they get there they’ll feel comfortable so they’ll communicate and engage.”¹⁸⁹

This lesson was also shared by Maraia Tabunakawai of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, who leads the movement’s intergenerational team. She emphasised the importance of creating a space that encourages respectful participation:

“In bringing different groups into the same space you have to respect the group guidelines. Because some people might react physically, you know they might turn their head away if they hear something they don’t like. Your different belief systems are being confronted before you even listen to what another person is saying [...] so you have to try and manage that kind of space.”¹⁹⁰

4.2.2 Strengthening capacity of activists

To successfully bring younger generations to the table, movements need to actively acknowledge the difference in experience and capacity of youth activists without condescension or paternalism. Older activists can do this by offering to share their skills in a mentorship and capacity building role. Youth activist Natasha Wang Mwansa highlighted this need in her plenary address at Women Deliver 2019, where she explained that young activists need “proper capacity building mechanisms in every single country. Young people need to be empowered with skills, with techniques [...] capacity building is key”.¹⁹¹

This has been recognised by some movements, with organisations such as Akili Dada in Kenya running programmes for the “self-development of girls and young women” through skills development, mentorship and networking. This programme not only benefits the youth activists involved, it also strengthens the broader African feminist movement and ensures “there is continuity in the crucial work of this movement”.¹⁹²

Mentoring was one of the most common ways for different generations to work together in the movements. Many participants were pleased with their mentorship experiences. Both younger and older activists spoke of them as being an exchange,¹⁹³ about knowledge sharing and experience sharing,¹⁹⁴ and working both ways.¹⁹⁵ However, they also stressed that mentorship needs to be taken seriously and not seen as a “nice chat now and again”.¹⁹⁴

CASE STUDY

Succession planning in a hostile environment



Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) is an umbrella organisation that coordinates the work of 18 LGBTQI+ organisations in Uganda, as well as advocating for policy reform. SMUG works to end discrimination and injustice towards LGBTQI+ people in Uganda, and to ensure that all Ugandans are equally respected and valued regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Pepe Julian Onziema is a founding member and has been involved in the Ugandan LGBTQI+ movement since the 1990s.

The Ugandan political and social context means that members of the LGBT+ movement often face danger and hostility and many are afraid to become involved. Pepe has struggled with this in SMUG, and it has impacted on the ability to work intergenerationally and hand the movement over to the next generation:

“We’re not trying to run out membership like parliament, like old men. You might say ‘you’ve been here

since 2006’ but it’s hard to find people for SMUG. People think you have to be out to work in SMUG.”

Pepe advocates continuously building leaders to run the organisation through mentorship and partnerships with younger activists and groups within the LGBTQI+ community. He is aware that mentorship should be a shared experience: “Young people have something to bring to the table and older people do too.” SMUG tries to partner younger activists with older activists they will be more responsive to:

“We make sure people partner together. We don’t want young people to organise on their own, but in the event they do we bring in a mentor for them who is fun.”

SMUG is also trying to foster intergenerational and intersectional working more broadly throughout the LGBTQI+ movement, creating consortiums to encourage partnerships:

“We have formed a Uganda Key Populations¹⁹⁷ consortium. The youngest will be 19 and the oldest is 70. It’s about a year old, it’s vibrant, and we see how the different age groups really work within this consortium.”

Pepe recommends activists focus on supporting each other, despite differences in age or other identities:

“The different age groups need to be inclusive with each other at every stage, sometimes it can just be me sitting in a room, saying nothing, but you still feel supported.”

4.2.3 Succession planning in movements to ensure sustainability

In many cases, movements or organisations are established around the energy of a few core individuals who perform a key management function. It is therefore important to focus on succession planning, putting in place structures and processes to mitigate against a sudden drop in capacity when people want to leave or step back from critical positions. In Nigeria, Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi observed that if “there’s not intergenerational continuity, an organisation might have been running for 20 or 25 years, where are the young people to move it forward?”¹⁹⁸ Being denied access to leadership in this way can be “very painful”¹⁹⁹ and leave youth activists feeling unsupported and excluded from the movement.

Raise Your Voice in St Lucia has been confronting this issue. The movement is primarily made up of women in their 50s, and does not currently have any younger women involved in its management. Its president, Catherine Sealys, explained how the management team considered increasing youth representation in the organisation at a recent annual general meeting:

“We decided [...] to build a legacy and create another group [of younger people] that could carry on the management of the group, because none of us are going to live forever.”²⁰⁰

When Alicia Wallace founded Equality Bahamas she did not intend to stay on as director long-term, but wanted to “actively make space for younger people to be part of the movement and gain the leadership skills.”²⁰¹

While intergenerational organising can keep movements alive, to ensure succession is sustainable, ownership over the movement’s goals, strategies and messages must be shared across the age groups. Maraia Tabunakawai of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement recommends that movements ask themselves:

- who feels ownership over the goals and messages?
- is it a diverse group of people or a group formed of a single age or identity?²⁰²

For youth-led movements in particular, preserving the organisational knowledge and experience of members who ‘age out’ or move between age categories can be a pertinent challenge. CYGEN is designed to foster collaboration between activists aged 18-30 across the Commonwealth, and is currently exploring how to maintain activists within the network after they age out at 30:

“We’re working on an alumni engagement strategy for people who age out so we can keep the organisational intelligence within the network. This is a really big thing for me because if it was an NGO or a business you’d be really annoyed because there’s no organisational sustainability. So how do you create space rather than limit it?”²⁰³

This was also a question raised by Women in Fisheries in Fiji which currently does not have any youth-led programming. Though they are interested in establishing programming for young women they are wondering:

“Where do these young women who graduate [from young women’s programmes] go to get involved after these programmes? What is the learning and accountability?”²⁰⁴

As CYGEN and Women in Fisheries identified, it is vital for movements to maintain the knowledge and experience of members as they move between age groups. As well as ensuring the sustainability of the movement, it also provides ongoing support and connection for individual activists as “your practice does not stop after you age out.”²⁰⁵

To ensure effective succession planning, experienced leaders need to ensure they are building the leadership capacity of the next generation. This is true not just within activist movements but in spaces where women and

LGBT+ people have obtained participation such as in politics, business and religious institutions. Older leaders are often best placed to open the doors to the next generation by providing space and support.

CASE STUDY

Leadership training for young activists in Nepal



Women LEAD provides young women in Nepal with the skills, support and opportunities to become leaders and change-makers in their schools, communities, nation and the world. Women LEAD is a youth-driven and youth-led organisation. One part of Women LEAD's work is their signature year-long LEAD course. The programme is delivered to young women in Kathmandu who receive individualised guidance and support from a peer mentor over the course of a year, as well as attending monthly workshops and participating in advocacy with Women LEAD. These young women then become LEADers, using the skills and knowledge they have developed to deliver programmes to other young people.

Women LEAD makes a lifelong commitment to all the young women who go through their programmes. After young women finish the LEAD course, they remain connected as mentors for new LEADers, interns, staff members and board members. All of Women LEAD's Nepal board members are former LEADers. These young women also join the alumni community, which is an active community that is constantly growing as Women LEAD reaches more young women. To make the alumni community valuable to its members, Women LEAD ask the alumni committee what their needs and interests are and implement responsive programming and professional development training. In the past, Women LEAD has delivered workshops on issues such as:

- grant writing
- fundraising
- project management
- creative writing
- journalism.

The alumni community is currently approximately 300 women, and most of the alumni are still studying or in their early careers. However, Women LEAD recognises it will have to expand its programmes to cater to the needs of its members as they move into different stages of their lives.

5 Conclusion

When movements work intergenerationally, activists of all generations report improved experience sharing and skills development, an enriched understanding of the historical narrative of the movement and development of personal relationships and support mechanisms. Capitalising on this solidarity can significantly strengthen the drive towards equality.

Social movements are not homogenous, and the perceptions and experiences of one individual or group may not be transferrable to others. However, there are certain elements of intergenerational movement building that are experienced broadly in both the women's and LGBT+ movements. The research indicated that young activists often resent tokenism and condescension, while older generations can feel unheard or even excluded from more modern activist spaces.

To be truly meaningful, intergenerational movements must ensure that power is shared within and among the generations. Younger and older activists must be allowed to flourish and achieve *power with* each other. This is crucial, in order to ensure that there is more than one generation defining the movement.²⁰⁶ The wisdom of the activists in this research underlines and reaffirms the idea of intergenerational organising, where knowledge, support, and responsibility are shared across the generations.

Indeed, several activists from older generations acknowledged that change and adaptation is an important part of building an inclusive and responsive movement. Catherine Sealys and Kenita Placide noted that flexibility and adaptability are important because norms and standards change over time. Catherine noted: "You need to carry the mandate [...] but you can amend it from time to time to meet with new developments and the times",²⁰⁷ while Kenita explained: "Change is inevitable and other people inputting into an idea doesn't mean they're not respecting you."²⁰⁸

Despite the challenges faced, many movements have made strides to introduce intergenerational dialogues and cooperation. For those who have had success, finding common ground, trying to set aside resentment and distrust, working towards collective responsibility, and acknowledging and appreciating what each generation can bring to the movement are key. It is important to consider intergenerational participation at all stages of the movement and particularly crucial for the movement's overall sustainability and strength.

Movements that are truly intergenerational are the most sustainable and impactful. They have wisdom and vitality, they have a history and a future. Given their immense and important aims, it is imperative to build on the strength and solidarity of the different generations. If these generations can work through women's and LGBT+ movements in collective responsibility and solidarity then momentum, strength and sustainability of the movements will be formidable.

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APPENDIX: MOVEMENT SCOPING

As part of this research, 207 women's and LGBT+ movements across 14 countries were identified. These included women's, LGBT+ and combined organisations, campaigns movements and individual activists. The following table shows the number of groups found in each region and country and the number that have a women's rights focus, an LGBT+ rights focus or a dual focus:

TABLE 1: WOMEN'S AND LGBT+ MOVEMENTS

Country	Total number of groups	Number of women's groups	Number of LGBT+ groups	Number of combined groups
Regional – Pacific	13	8	3	2
Fiji	13	5	4	4
Papua New Guinea	12	7	5	0
Samoa	6	2	3	1
Tonga	3	2	1	0
Regional – Caribbean	12	6	4	2
Barbados	13	4	7	2
Jamaica	10	6	2	2
St Lucia	7	3	1	3
St Vincent and the Grenadines	3	1	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	6	3	3	0
Regional – Africa	15	10	2	3
Botswana	13	6	2	5
Kenya	26	18	7	1
Mauritius	7	2	2	3
Namibia	17	12	3	2
Uganda	31	21	7	3
	207	116	57	34

Around a third of the organisations and campaigns had been established for over 11 years, while another third had been active for over 20 years. Of the groups mapped, 121 (58%) had known dates of inception, and of these, 80% had been established in 2013 or earlier.²⁰⁹

The movements focused on a diverse range of issues. Of the 207 groups mapped, 41% (85) were focused on a single issue such as political representation or violence against women and girls (VAWG), and 50% (103) were campaigning on multiple issues. Over half of the groups were engaged in campaigning or advocacy, while 45% have a service delivery role. Thought leadership was offered by 28% of groups. Fourteen percent had a research component.

TABLE 2: TYPES OF ACTIVISM

Country	Activities/ Services	Campaigns	Research	Thought leadership
Regional – Pacific	4	4	3	2
Fiji	2	11	4	8
Papua New Guinea	2	6	1	1
Samoa	4	1	0	1
Tonga	3	2	0	2
Regional – Caribbean	1	9	3	6
Barbados	3	9	0	2
Jamaica	3	7	2	6
St Lucia	2	2	0	3
St Vincent and the Grenadines	1	1	0	0
Trinidad and Tobago	2	3	0	1
Regional – Africa	8	11	6	9
Botswana	6	8	2	4
Kenya	16	17	5	8
Mauritius	4	6	2	0
Namibia	12	9	0	1
Uganda	21	13	2	4

The following table sets out the focus areas and the number of groups that fell into each area:

TABLE 3: TOPICS COVERED BY WOMEN’S AND LGBT+ MOVEMENTS

Focus area	Number
Gender equality	37
LGBT+ equality	27
Violence against women and girls (VAWG)	24
Networking	12
Women in leadership	12
Health	11
Trans rights	7
Media platforms	6
Sex work	6
Girls’ rights	5
Youth leadership	5
LBT rights	4
Economic empowerment	3
Working women	3
Minority women’s rights	3
Education	2
Law and access to justice	1

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**“A multigenerational approach
is a very political decision to
question the power that exists
within us.”**

Jyotsna Maskay
Chairperson LOOM Nepal



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