

# **ADOLESCENT GIRL SUMMIT**

## **LEARNING REPORT**

**This is a summary of the learning report that we wrote for Global Fund for Children. We have summarised the findings and recommendations so that you, past adolescent participants, panel members and 2024 participants can also read what we shared.**



# About the Summit

The first West Africa Adolescent Girls Summit took place in Liberia, in April 2022 and brought together more than a hundred adolescent girls and boys aged 13 - 19 for a week of skills training, team building, and campaign activities.

Adolescents representing Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia and more than two dozen government institutions, UN agencies, and international NGOs came together. The Summit was organised by Global Fund for Children in collaboration with grantee partners from Sierra Leone and Liberia.

# Why did the Summit focus on girls?



Girls are often overlooked, yet they have distinct needs, challenges and priorities, which tend to be ignored.

Due to gender discriminatory and ageist social norms, girls are also not encouraged to share their opinions or participate in decision-making about their lives.

Yet across the world, girls are resisting inequality and injustice. They are leading advocacy and activism efforts in their communities and are powerful forces of change.

Boys were identified by girls as critical allies, with a lot to learn, and it was important that boys were part of the process, so that boys and girls could tackle gender inequalities together.

# How did boys and girls lead?



**Girls and boys were involved at every stage, from designing to implementing the Summit.**

**Representatives from different regions in Sierra Leone and Liberia joined local and regional panels so they could plan together. The panels included girls and boys from rural and urban areas.**

**Girls and boys designed the agenda, they facilitated sessions and they made decisions about hotel safety, logistics and planning.**

# Why was the Summit so powerful for girls?

It built connections and friendships between adolescents.

It brought girls together to share similar experiences with gender inequality and be able to come up with shared solutions together.

It built girls' confidence and self-esteem, helping to share their voice with others.

It was an opportunity to learn about girls' rights issues such as violence, FGC and also comprehensive sexuality education.

# How did the Summit impact boys and girls?

It helped boys learn about their role in tackling gender equality.

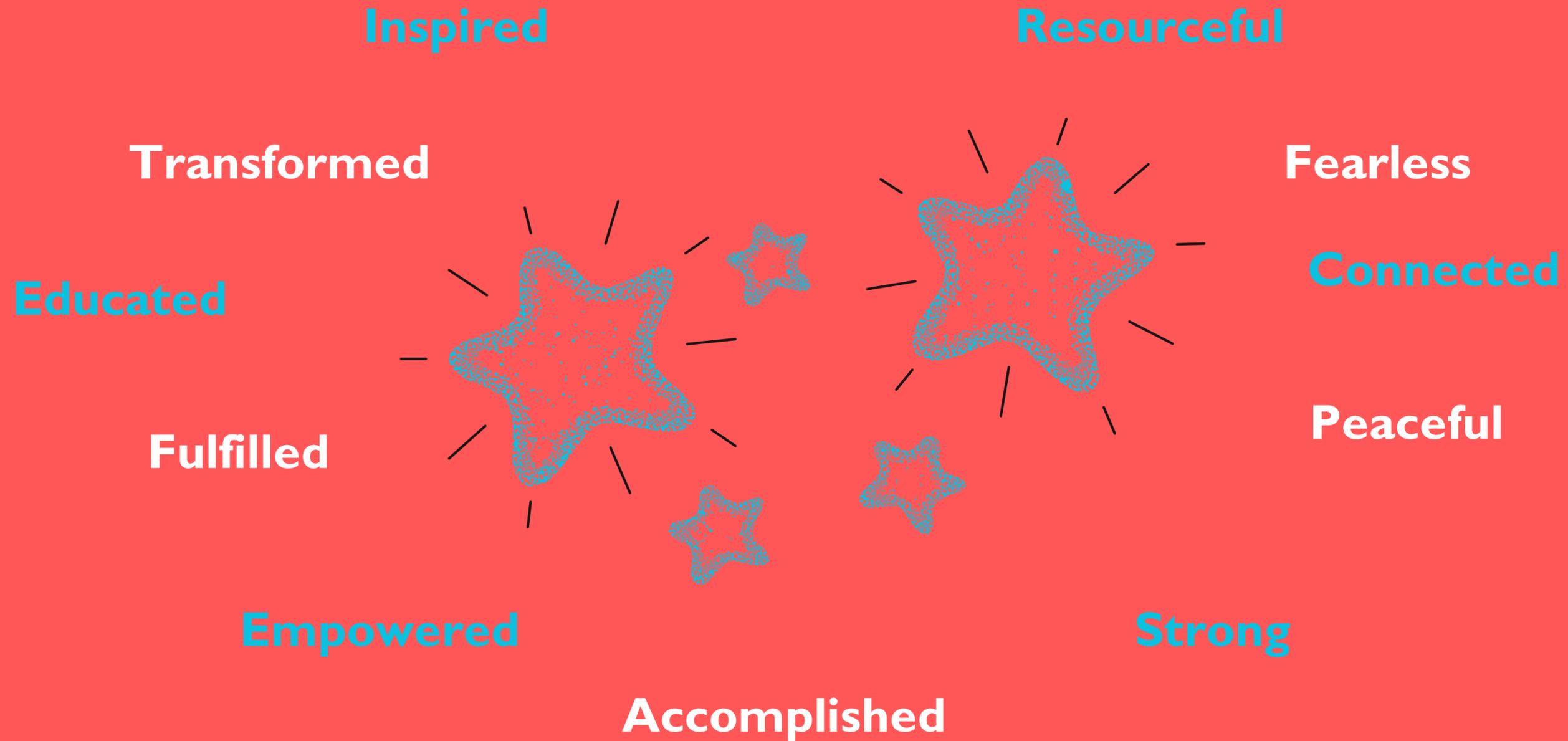
It prompted reflection on how girls have been discriminated against and how to make space for girls to lead.

It sparked energy in boys and girls to continue advocating for gender equality in their communities.

Boys and girls learnt new skills and knowledge like how to plan an event, how to do advocacy and campaigning and how to use social media.

It showed that adults can be allies too - in communities, in local organisations, adults can support and be in solidarity with adolescents.

# How did boys and girls feel after the Summit?



# What we learnt

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Learning is a two way street. By listening to girls and boys, we can learn to do things differently too e.g. how we organise ourselves, or how we influence decision-makers.

Meaningful and inclusive collaboration takes time and needs to work around the schedules and responsibilities of girls and boys.

Adolescents know best. They are capable of designing the networking and advocacy space they need.

For girls and boys to lead, we need to truly share decision-making power as adults.

Young role models are important for girls and boys to see. There should be young women and men in guiding positions.

Adolescents received per diems and certificates of participation. There might be potential for other forms of recognition for local and regional panel members.

Diversity can take many forms and should be prioritised not just in Summit participants but in the planning panels too - girls, boys, LGBTQIA+ youth, disabled youth and girls/boys from rural and urban areas.

There is a preference for mixed gender groups, but girl-only spaces are also important for discussing sensitive issues.

# Recommendations to GFC and local partners

1. Continue to resource and support an adolescent-centered Summit, focused on girls' rights and power, working with local organisations.
2. Recognise that meaningful participation is a process and requires time and space for learning.
3. Continue to centre girls. It is great to have a youth-led partner and to have boys in the room with a clear role, but the spotlight should still be on girls.
4. Continue to open the space to other groups and identities to bring in diverse experiences and perspectives. eg. LGBTQIA youth, youth with disabilities, young mothers, girls in and out of school etc.
5. Develop a safeguarding team and process, with input and collaboration with adolescents. Ensure care and wellbeing are part of this with support for participants on sensitive and triggering issues.
6. Explore funding, philanthropy and economic power in the Summit, recognising GFC's role as a funder.
7. Consider girl/boy-only sessions for sensitive topics, with space to come back together and share with each other.
8. Continue to collaborate with youth-led organisations, working with local groups and the inclusion of young women/young feminist role models and partners.
9. Develop a learning and documentation plan for the 2024 Summit, with clear roles for adolescents as reporters, writers and collaborators.
10. Use your power and position with other funders to call on them to resource more participatory processes and advocacy with children and young people, particularly adolescent girls.

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a gold floral-patterned top and a blue lanyard, is seen from the back, speaking into a microphone. She is addressing a large, diverse group of people seated in an outdoor setting with trees in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a daytime event.

**Thank you!**