



BUILDING POWER SCALING CHANGE MEETING THE MOMENT

Reflections from Wallace Global Fund Spend-Out
and Decades of Supporting Progressive Movements

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A MOMENT TO GO ALL IN



More than 80 years ago, Henry A. Wallace issued a prophetic warning of rising American fascism. With that danger now resurgent, along with intersecting threats to global justice and a livable planet, the foundation he created is going all in—and calling on other funders to join us.

In 1944, Henry A. Wallace, then vice president under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, issued a prescient warning to the American people. In “The Danger of American Fascism,” penned for *The New York Times*,¹ Wallace expressed less concern with Axis sympathizers lurking in our midst and instead sounded the alarm about those who would combine xenophobia, corporate hegemony, and the power of the state to “keep the common man in eternal subjection.”

It is no coincidence that the growth of modern tyrants has in every case been heralded by the growth of prejudice,” Wallace wrote. “They claim to be super-patriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They demand free enterprise, but are the spokesmen for monopoly and vested interest.”

Wallace wrote these words during a great inflection point in history, looking beyond the immediate perils of war and asking Americans what kind of country we wanted to be when we came out on the other side. A beacon of progressive thought—Wallace was an architect of the New Deal and a fierce opponent of segregation—he spent his life challenging us to fulfill the promise of a country of and for the people. In one of his many notable speeches, he called for a “people’s revolution” in pursuit of freedom for all,² a stark contrast to the conservative push at the time for a system dominated by free enterprise.

In the years that followed, Wallace Global Fund, the foundation that carries on the values Henry A. Wallace championed, has held his prophetic warnings and his vision for a better world as something of a North Star. Wallace was driven by a fundamental belief that we must always put

people over profit, and that our governments and institutions must always center the rights of the “common man” over corporate interests. He also understood that we can only achieve this goal through collective power—demanding transformative change and confronting those at the top who would deny us our rights.

Wallace Global Fund has spent the past three decades throwing our full weight behind power-building and movements seeking that change,

working on a number of intersecting issues and problems. Along the way, we have come to think of ourselves, and many others that we stand in solidarity with, as a distinct type of philanthropic actor—an **activist funder**. We use the term to describe a funder that is driven by a commitment to transformative and systemic change, guided by values that center the rights of the people, and following a set of practices that honor those values. It is a label that we wear with pride, and it is a philosophy that led us to the work we have supported over the years and the pivotal moment we find ourselves in today.

As much as we would like to say that the problems of Henry A. Wallace’s era are behind us, the march of history has its own plans, and the mass organizing of people is needed more than ever. Just as our founder lived during a pivot point in

history, today we find ourselves staring down a barrage of urgent threats that are global and intersecting. A new brand of American fascism is rising, perhaps more insidious than that of the mid-20th century. Democratic governance is decaying worldwide, xenophobia is ripping families apart, inequality is surging, and the climate catastrophe adds fuel to the ever-intensifying fire.

It is within this context that Wallace Global Fund made a tough decision, but the only one that we could make—**we are going all in**. In the past 10 years, we have accelerated our payout, and now we are fully spending out, pouring all of the resources we have into the struggle for a just, multiracial democracy in the U.S., global human rights, and a flourishing planet.

We did not make this decision lightly, and there were a few converging factors that got us here. First and foremost, we were moved by the scale of the challenges we face. Outside of the debate over foundation perpetuity, we asked ourselves the question: What would be the commensurate response to the threats that our society and our partners are facing right now? What magic number—what percentage of our institution and our assets—would match the need? The only answer we could land on was 100%.

But it would be too simple to boil this down to an emergency response. We know from history, and from our own experience in backing organizing and movements, that it is in the moments when everything seems to be crashing down that tremendous leaps forward also become possible. Just as in Henry A. Wallace’s time, we are again at an inflection point. Drastically different outcomes lie before us, and paths toward rapid transformative change are opening up.

Right now, that potential is being seized upon by the people we support—the organizers on the ground. Pro-democracy movements are advancing

rapidly, with threads of activism coalescing into a broad push, not to take us back to where we were before the current surge of authoritarianism, but to catapult us forward to forge democracies that fulfill the rights and needs of their people. We are pouring resources into these emerging movements, not because they need us, but because we *need them*.

We decided that with our spending out, it would be wise to not only document the journey that Wallace Global Fund has taken as an activist funder, but also to take a crack at defining exactly what we think that means. So the following pages are something of a look back at what we are most proud of supporting, as well as a reflection on why we have done the things we’ve done. We seek to commemorate and to amplify the great work of our frontline partners, and also to add to the current discourse in philanthropy.

We know that not every funder will follow the same path as Wallace Global Fund. Having said that, we do believe that the path we have chosen holds lessons for others who share our commitment to justice. We need more activist funders, and we hope others out there might read this, grapple with the question of how we can all do more now, and go harder and further toward supporting transformative change. The moment requires it.

To quote Henry A. Wallace again, “if we put our trust in the common sense of common men and ‘with malice toward none and charity for all’ go forward on the great adventure of making political, economic and social democracy a practical reality, we shall not fail.”³

We hope you will join us
in this great adventure.

AN ACTIVIST FUNDER

Rooted in our founder's progressive vision, Wallace Global Fund has dedicated itself to supporting people-powered movements for a just world. We are proud to call ourselves an activist funder, and we encourage others to embrace the qualities that define the term.



It was Henry A. Wallace’s foundational understanding of how power perpetuates injustice, and how power in the hands of everyday people can triumph over it, that planted the seed for Wallace Global Fund to become an activist foundation.

He articulated a certain understanding of the core of injustice, and how to dismantle it, that is perhaps more relevant than ever. Wallace warned of the dangers at the intersection of corporate capture and an authoritarian state, and he had a shrewd power analysis that recognized that *social change comes from the people when they challenge the outsized influence of moneyed elites*.

That seed was nurtured by our allies in philanthropy, the grantee partners that we have been honored to support, and the values and clarity of historic movements for justice that came long before us. The resulting philosophy has led us to pursue transformative change across a set of intersecting priorities, driven by the strategies and organizing of those most affected.

The word activist carries a lot of weight, as it should. It is a descriptor that many in our sector might shy away from, and one that critics might even dismiss as simplistic, overly partisan, or divisive. But we wear it as a badge of honor and strive to live up to what we believe activism should look like in the philanthropic space.

This approach is defined by a particular lens through which we view our work, one that is relentlessly progressive and committed to transformative change through the power of people. It also lies in philanthropic practices—the way we put our values into action.

1. Acting with Courage and Urgency

Courage is not a trait that is intrinsic to Wallace Global Fund, nor is it one that sets us apart as some kind of fearless hero or savior. In retrospect,

we haven’t always met the challenge. But to us, courage and urgency mean that we strive to match the bravery of the people that we support. We believe that is the least that we can do as funders, as those privileged to have resources that can be deployed at this historic moment.

Organizers on the ground face real, tremendous danger, including the danger of imprisonment, bodily harm as they put themselves on the line for the causes they support, and even death. We have seen this many times in the case of environmental defenders and gender activists in frontline communities around the world—and very recently during the peaceful protest of authoritarian threats on the streets of American cities.

Philanthropy, on the other hand, does not face the same risks. Many of us work in air-conditioned offices and have personal wealth or generous salaries and benefits. We face minimal accountability from the markets or the electorate, and government pressure, while very real, mostly threatens our charitable tax status. We work proudly alongside many courageous foundations and donors, but too often our sector acts with far more trepidation than our partners do.

Therefore, we should not be taking the safe approach. We have the resources, the financial power, and unique leverage tied to our social and political capital, and we should act accordingly. That means speeding up our approaches, resisting the urge to waffle under political scrutiny, and using our own voices to buoy our partners and their work. Ultimately, this comes down to being in solidarity with the frontline organizers who face the true danger that comes with the fight for social change.

2. Shifting Power to Create Transformative Change

Key to supporting transformative change is having a strong power analysis—understanding that power lies at the heart of all of the issues we engage with, and that to realize a just and thriving democratic society, we must build collective power and confront those who have power and abuse it.

Henry A. Wallace was clear-eyed on this, identifying that “the directing of this country does not at present belong to the people, but to a relative handful of wealthy men. The foundation of the government, as presently constituted, is not the general welfare, but the special privilege of industrial and financial giants.”⁴ He feared the full capture of U.S. democracy by industry and moneyed elites, and he argued that the success of democracy requires civil society to relentlessly hold those in power accountable.

This is a bold viewpoint, but also a strategic one. History shows us that any leap forward toward the full rights of the people has been driven by a surge in public power, led by movements making demands not limited to modest improvements on the margins, but calling for transformative change. People who are on the frontlines recognize that deep flaws in our systems generate mass injustice and inequality, and until we confront them and build something better, we will only achieve incremental improvement, akin to Band-Aids.

Shifting power also means confronting it. Philanthropy too often acts as a headwind slowing progress in the name of civility and order, minimizing disruption and conflict at all costs. An *activist* knows that justice is not achieved by asking politely. An *activist funder* centers universal rights of the people and heeds the goals and strategies of those challenging the power structures that would deny us those rights.

3. Supporting Movements

The power to generate transformative change has always been built by organizers and harnessed and directed by social movements—the suffragists, slavery abolitionists, the American Indian Movement, the farmworkers’ movement, the Anti-Apartheid movement, Standing Rock water defenders, Black Lives Matter, and activists fighting for marriage equality, climate divestment, and any number of other causes.

And yet, philanthropy sends relative pennies to frontline community organizing and power-building. Instead it favors large, professionalized NGOs, consulting firms, policy shops, and others who dwell mostly in elite spaces. While funders should support research and policy, it should be in service of the goals, strategies, and demands of those on the frontlines—the people organizing for collective power, who should be funded at much higher levels.

For the past few decades, researchers have estimated that funding for grassroots movements has hovered somewhere between 2% and 4% of overall giving, likely a high estimate, and the Institute for Policy Studies puts funding for progressive social change work somewhere between 1% and 3%.⁵ We periodically see bumps in support for organizers on the frontlines, but they are typically reactive and fleeting. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy has found that despite a bounce in funding during President Donald Trump’s first administration, pro-immigrant and refugee movement groups have seen their share of foundation giving shrink, and funding for both LGBTQ+ communities and immigrant rights has declined in the first years of the 2020s.⁶

Supporting Power-Building and Frontline Movements

- Provide long-term funding to frontline groups, organizing, and advocacy, thus building durable power and deepening capacities over years.
- Invest in leadership—especially youth. Young people are nearly always the drivers of social change. Give them the tools they need to thrive.
- Fund the movement ecosystem, not just individual groups. Movements are hydra-headed. They have organizations embedded within them, not the other way around.
- Support infrastructure—trainings, convenings, safety and security measures, legal support, and the organizations that provide them.
- Be flexible. Movements always evolve, and we should support the fresh trajectories that come out of them.
- Be in solidarity—align yourself publicly and organizationally with your partners.
- Take it to scale. When a movement takes off, be ready to rapidly pour resources into it.

This calls into question whether funders who overlook movements are truly committed to creating change, or at least the kind of transformative change that activists often demand. Organizers are frequently told by officials, pundits, and foundations alike that their goals are too big and too idealistic, and they are cautioned against making clear, strong demands that might alienate the general public. We have seen, however, that a powerful social movement can, seemingly overnight, alter the public perception of what is possible—what is necessary—and inspire collective action and sweeping change.

Allowing these movements to thrive means building power on the frontlines, not only making grants to individual organizations, but also supporting a wide range of activities that create a broader ecosystem primed for social change in which movements can emerge. That means providing long-term and durable funding for grassroots and community organizing work long before specific movements actually take off, and creating or scaling the organizing infrastructure that allows them to do so. When a movement does begin to gain momentum, we can then pour in the resources that add wind to their sails.

Finally, we should work assiduously to be accountable to the frontline organizers we back and act in service of their priorities. Foundations and donors are sometimes accused of being the engineers of the strategies and demands of social movements. This implies that calls for human rights or racial justice are somehow manufactured by shadowy donors pulling the strings, a spurious claim. (Those who back organizers know that this is not how it works, if for no other reason than because no funder can control a social movement.) It is the case, however, that we should always keep our own influence in check—we *facilitate*, we *support*, we *stand in solidarity*, but we *work for them*, not the other way around.

4. Using All of Your Tools

While our principal role is to provide resources to social change organizations, grantmaking is just the tip of the iceberg. If our support for the frontlines is limited to a small fraction of our relatively enormous assets, we are not playing to win, nor are we standing in solidarity. Regardless of whether you represent a foundation, a donor-advised fund, or a family office, your power goes well beyond your charitable donations.

We have the power to use our voices to lend legitimacy and credibility in our own sector and in the halls of power, as well as to advocate for causes within our legal rights.

We have the power to align our organizations' internal structures, hiring decisions, operations, and practices to match the values we support.

We have the power to convene—organizing our peers to support, align, and resource power-building and frontline movements, and facilitating exchanges of knowledge.

And finally, we have the power of our investments, so we are not exacerbating the problems of the world with our own capital and leaving our grantees to clean up the mess.



How Wallace Global Fund Achieved 100% Mission-Aligned Investment

The financial system can contribute to injustice, inequality, and vast environmental harm. WGF has consciously aligned its grantmaking and investments as integrated tools to advance our mission. As foundations, we receive charitable tax status to serve the public good. WGF believes that when donors separate their investments from their mission, values, and grantmaking priorities, they are inevitably driving the financial system’s negative impacts.

Conversely, if we understand that our investments can be a positive tool for change, we can help seed and scale innovative solutions to pressing problems, drive change in corporate practices, and advance sustainability and human rights. By using our investments and our shareholder power, we accelerate these positive results and multiply the impact of our grantees.

WGF began the process of fully aligning its missions and investments in 2009. After much research, our board decided to adopt a 100% mission-aligned investing approach, breaking down what is a traditional silo in most foundations, donor advised funds, and family offices operating today. Working with the SRI Wealth Management Group of RBC, and a powerhouse investment committee made up of leaders in the social and sustainable investing fields, we began an institution-changing process that saw our grantmaking and investment teams work together to design and implement high-impact strategies, shift the fields of finance, and support progressive movement goals and campaigns.

The approach and results summarized in this diagram yielded significant social and environmental impact and outsized returns. Coupled with our activist approach to grantmaking and encouraging other donors to take bold steps, WGF’s approach and impacts have had ripple effects for the philanthropic sector.

APPROACH

- Integrated investment and grant strategies for corporate accountability and social and environmental impacts
- Supported development of climate and gender just-finance fields with research, standards, investment product and fund creation, and campaigns
- 100% integration of ESG standards and customized criteria and targets to advance WGF mission and strategies, from last-mile energy access to community-driven ownership and economic benefits
- 5% of endowment deployed as catalytic investment capital to support and scale community-driven and -owned projects with high social returns and expectation of fair—not rapacious—returns
- Expanded fiduciary duty to include mission alignment and environmental and social impact of investments, while getting healthy returns



IMPACT

- Significant financial outperformance, achieving top-decile returns for foundations, whether traditionally invested or mission-aligned, for over a decade⁷
- Racial, economic, gender, and climate justice impacts aligned with grantee partner strategies
- Hundreds of successful shareholder actions
- Organized more than 200 foundations to divest from fossil fuels and invest in climate solutions
- WGF advocacy for mission alignment and divestment drove a sector-wide debate and saw new donors align investments with grants

Conclusion

None of what we have shared here is especially groundbreaking, nor was it invented by Wallace Global Fund. It is a synthesis of what we have gleaned over the years from our founder, our peers, our partners, and the inspiring movements for economic, gender, racial, and climate justice. We see this as an approach that is more necessary than ever, and one that keeps us accountable

to our partners. We hope that, above all else, our experiences carrying out this approach to philanthropy might be useful to other donors, some of whom we have walked with and others who will come after us.

Wallace Global Fund has worked holistically in support of democracy, corporate accountability, human rights, and a flourishing and healthy planet, while deeply engaging on specific issues and with

particular movements. We have funded hundreds of frontline leaders, collectives, and organizations over the years, attempting to use all of the power at our disposal to support them. While there are far too many to name, the following sections seek to summarize some initiatives we have been most proud to support, a snapshot of six core areas of work.

ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/ CUTTING

From the beginning, Wallace Global Fund has been committed to advancing women's rights and gender justice, rooting this effort in Henry A. Wallace's pioneering advocacy for gender equality and equal pay for equal work in the 1940s.⁸ As the movement for gender equality has evolved, so has WGF's approach to supporting women's dignity and freedom. Bob Wallace, Henry's son, and Bob's wife, Gordon "Gordie" Wallace, extended WGF's commitment to gender equality by focusing on advancing women's rights and stabilizing population growth.



Bob and Gordie were pathbreaking champions of issues often neglected by other foundations and donors, such as the reproductive health needs of adolescents and access to safe abortion services. They also prioritized international family planning, innovative finance, and reproductive health technologies. More recently, WGF has turned its attention to the disproportionate effects the climate crisis and economic inequality have had on women. It has supported organizations and networks working to transform economic structures and systems in ways that advance women's rights and gender and racial justice.



Gordie Wallace's Pioneering Work on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)—the partial or total removal of female genitalia for nonmedical reasons—has been endured by over 230 million women and girls worldwide, including

over 144 million in Africa, 80 million in Asia, and 6 million in the Middle East. FGM/C can cause immediate health complications such as severe pain, excessive bleeding, and infection, as well as long-term consequences, including complications during childbirth, chronic pain, and lasting psychological trauma. This harmful act is overwhelmingly inflicted on children—often before they can speak, understand, or consent—with lifelong consequences for their bodily autonomy, health, and well-being.

A sociologist and expert on women's reproductive health, Gordie Wallace launched WGF's grantmaking focused on ending FGM/C and called it her "life's work." Starting in 1979, WGF made its first strategic grants to organizations fighting the practice. From 1980 to 1994, Gordie was director of the African Women's Health Project at Population Action International, where she prioritized efforts to eradicate FGM/C in Africa.

Gordie firmly believed that lasting change would not come from the outside. Instead, she looked to the affected communities and to the local leaders, health workers, and activists who were breaking the silence and raising the issue publicly. As Gordie observed, "Although still only a small percentage of African women are speaking out, their courage is contagious."

In Gordie's view, it was the role of foundations and other institutions to support the courageous work of these frontline activists. She also felt it was crucial for philanthropy to engage with humility and patience in supporting these communities and their leaders over the long term with the resources they needed. For this reason, Gordie insisted on working largely in the background to strategize and mobilize resources while centering the work of movement leaders and survivors.

The Growing Global Movement to End FGM/C: WGF Deepens Its Commitment

Gordie Wallace died in 1994. To honor her pioneering work, WGF deepened its commitment to the movement she had helped nurture. The global movement to end FGM/C has continued to grow and has made important strides in recent years. Governments and international organizations are increasingly prioritizing the issue, and laws and policies are changing around the world. Public acceptance of FGM/C is declining in many regions, and social norms are turning against the practice—largely due to the courage and tenacity of survivors and the resilience of frontline movements.¹⁶

Despite these hopeful developments, continued progress is not assured. There is a growing, increasingly coordinated, and well-funded backlash against the movement to end FGM/C.^{17,18} Transnational and strategic, the leaders of this anti-rights effort exploit anti-colonial and nationalist rhetoric to reinforce patriarchal norms and justify rollbacks on protections for women's and girls' bodily autonomy.¹⁹ They push national and regional

governments to retreat from international legal commitments and weaken multilateral frameworks. They also attempt to systematically shrink civic space through restrictive legislation such as "foreign agent" laws that criminalize or delegitimize civil society organizing.

The pushback against such initiatives has been stymied by the lack of a strategic and fully resourced funding approach to eradicating FGM/C. Although ending FGM/C is enshrined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, donor funding is still profoundly misaligned with the scale and urgency of the challenge. This is particularly true for the resources available to support work led by frontline activists and survivors. Without sustained, large-scale investment in the women and girls who are leading change in their own communities, millions more will continue to be harmed.

To meet these challenges and further accelerate the global movement against FGM/C, WGF has adopted a multi-pronged strategy that is focused on supporting the activists at the forefront of ending FGM/C.

A powerful example of Bob and Gordie's use of innovative finance to advance women's health was WGF's support for bringing emergency contraception to the U.S. market. Major pharmaceutical companies refused to take on the political risk associated with this product. For this reason, WGF became an angel investor in Women's Capital Corporation, the company that successfully secured FDA approval for Plan B in 1999 and later went on to spearhead the early, historic effort to make emergency contraception available over the counter.⁹ Women's Capital Corporation was eventually sold to Barr Pharmaceuticals, and the sale proceeds were reinvested into WGF.^{10,11} Wallace Global Fund was also an early backer of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, which was instrumental in bringing mifepristone (RU-486), a key element of medication abortion, to the United States.¹²



FGM is one of the worst forms of child abuse, and it does not occur in isolation. It is violence which has its roots in patriarchal misogyny, which denies women and girls rights to their bodies and their sexuality.

-Dr. Leyla Hussein

Wallace Global Fund's Strategic Approach: Supporting the Movements that Drive and Sustain Change

Ridding the world of FGM/C requires collective political strategy, solidarity across movements, and the sustained protection and resourcing of frontline leadership. WGF's strategic approach has prioritized these central elements:

Backing frontline activists with long-term support

While "big box" international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have historically received most of the funding focused on FGM/C, WGF has prioritized driving long-term, unrestricted support to frontline leaders and grassroots movements that are working creatively and energetically to end FGM/C in their own communities.

EXAMPLES: From FGM/C campaigns, clinics, and survivor-led organizations in settings as diverse as Nairobi, Singapore, and New York, WGF's funding has been guided by the conviction that local leaders know what works best in advancing social and political change in their communities.

Strategic convenings

Engaging in FGM/C advocacy can be dangerous, lonely, and overwhelming, and the fund has worked to create opportunities for partners to support each other, share lessons learned, and build solidarity within and across movements, regions, and sectors.

EXAMPLE: In 2016, the first-ever End Violence Against Girls: Summit on FGM/C in the U.S. was convened by Equality Now, Safe Hands for Girls, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the U.S. End FGM/C Network.²⁰ Hundreds of FGM/C activists, leaders, experts, and government officials gathered to build global momentum and political support for strengthened FGM/C policies, commitments, and funding.

Mobilizing resources and enhancing donor collaboration

Donor funding for FGM/C is still inadequate, and WGF has encouraged donor governments, multilateral organizations, and grantmaking foundations to invest more resources into ending FGM/C. It has also encouraged the development of innovative financing mechanisms for FGM/C work.

EXAMPLE: Co-founded by Wallace Global Fund in 2001, the Donors Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting continues to engage donors in information exchange, donor advocacy, and collaboration.

AN ESTIMATED
4.4
MILLION

girls are at risk of being cut each year.²⁶

230
MILLION

women and girls alive today have undergone FGM—including over 575,000 in the United States.^{23,24}

Investing in FGM/C movement infrastructure

WGF has centered FGM/C survivor care, safety, and well-being while recognizing the leadership of frontline survivors and activists. WGF has also prioritized creating spaces for connection, collaboration, and celebration.

EXAMPLE: Founded in 2019, the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C is a global consortium of civil society organizations, champions, survivors, and grassroots representatives united around the mission of supporting the abandonment and prevention of FGM/C.

Galvanizing global advocacy

In addition to its central focus on supporting frontline work on FGM/C prevention and care, WGF has prioritized national and global advocacy initiatives and intermediaries committed to elevating FGM/C on the international agenda. FGM/C is an urgent global human rights issue requiring a global response.

EXAMPLE: WGF and its partners waged a successful advocacy campaign to ensure that FGM/C was included in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, overcoming extensive pushback from some negotiators who viewed FGM/C as a niche issue only practiced in a small number of countries.

Amplifying media and strategic communications

Media outreach has emerged as an essential strategy in breaking the silence around FGM/C and in driving social change. Training local journalists and social media influencers has elevated survivor voices and helped to drive attitudinal shifts on FGM/C.

EXAMPLE: The Global Media Campaign to End FGM invests in the frontline movement to end FGM/C. Through its "Born Perfect" campaigns, community caravans convene faith leaders, health workers, police, and survivors for public dialogues on FGM/C. The campaign's regional training academies and media outreach have reached over 100 million people with anti-FGM/C messaging.

The Future: A Catalytic New Fund to Drive Resources to End FGM/C

As one of the few funders focused specifically on FGM/C, Wallace Global Fund’s impending departure from the field risked disruption, loss, and backsliding. To prevent these impacts, WGF’s board chose to seize the opportunity and infuse the global FGM/C movement with an unprecedented commitment—The Her Horizon Fund: Resourcing the Movement to End FGM/C.

To shape this catalytic new funding mechanism, WGF carried out a comprehensive, multi-year field assessment that involved extensive consultations with survivors, frontline activists, and a wide range of movement actors. WGF also mapped the donor landscape to better understand resource gaps, trends, and opportunities.

Informed by this work, the Her Horizon Fund is a new flexible funding mechanism that will facilitate a wide range of bilateral, philanthropic, and corporate donors pooling their funds and

leveraging their assets. Seeded with a commitment of more than \$14 million from WGF, this new funding vehicle will have the following key elements:

Achieve global grantmaking reach

Unlike other existing funding mechanisms, the Her Horizon Fund will be global in scope, not confined to specific high-prevalence regions.

Be guided by the movement-led collective vision

FGM/C activists and leaders from around the world are developing a global plan that will guide the fund’s strategic direction and funding priorities.

Model survivor-led governance

The fund’s design and approach have been shaped by FGM/C survivors and frontline activists, and they will guide the fund’s implementation.

Provide a direct pipeline to frontline organizations

A central feature of the fund will be its commitment to funding the frontline organizations that have historically been starved for resources.

Offer technical assistance and accompaniment

The fund will nurture and strengthen key intermediary organizations that support movement-led work, with an emphasis on advocacy and communications, resource mobilization, digital and physical security, monitoring and evaluation, and survivor care and well-being.

The Her Horizon Fund will be fiscally hosted by Women Win, a global women’s fund based in the Netherlands. Founded in 2007, Women Win is dedicated to the vision of a future where every girl and woman can freely exercise their rights. In 2025 alone, Women Win moved EUR 16.6 million in grants, partnering with 454 organizations across 124 geographies.²¹ Significantly, Women Win has extensive experience supporting small, frontline organizations, including unregistered groups.

Research shows that social “tipping points” can occur when a committed minority reaches roughly **25 percent of the population**.²² At that threshold, changes in social norms seen as inconceivable begin to be seen as inevitable. With a major funding infusion into frontline-led solutions and movements for change, WGF believes the FGM/C tipping point is within reach.

“

Ending FGM/C is a slow, sensitive process. It calls for patience, empathy, and respect for people’s fears. After more than a decade in this movement, I see progress. And I remain hopeful, because together, we are building something enduring.

–Dr. Chandni Shiyal
Asia Network to End FGM/C

FGM IS DOCUMENTED IN AT LEAST

94

COUNTRIES

only 58 have laws explicitly prohibiting it.²⁵

HER HORIZON FUND GOAL:

\$100

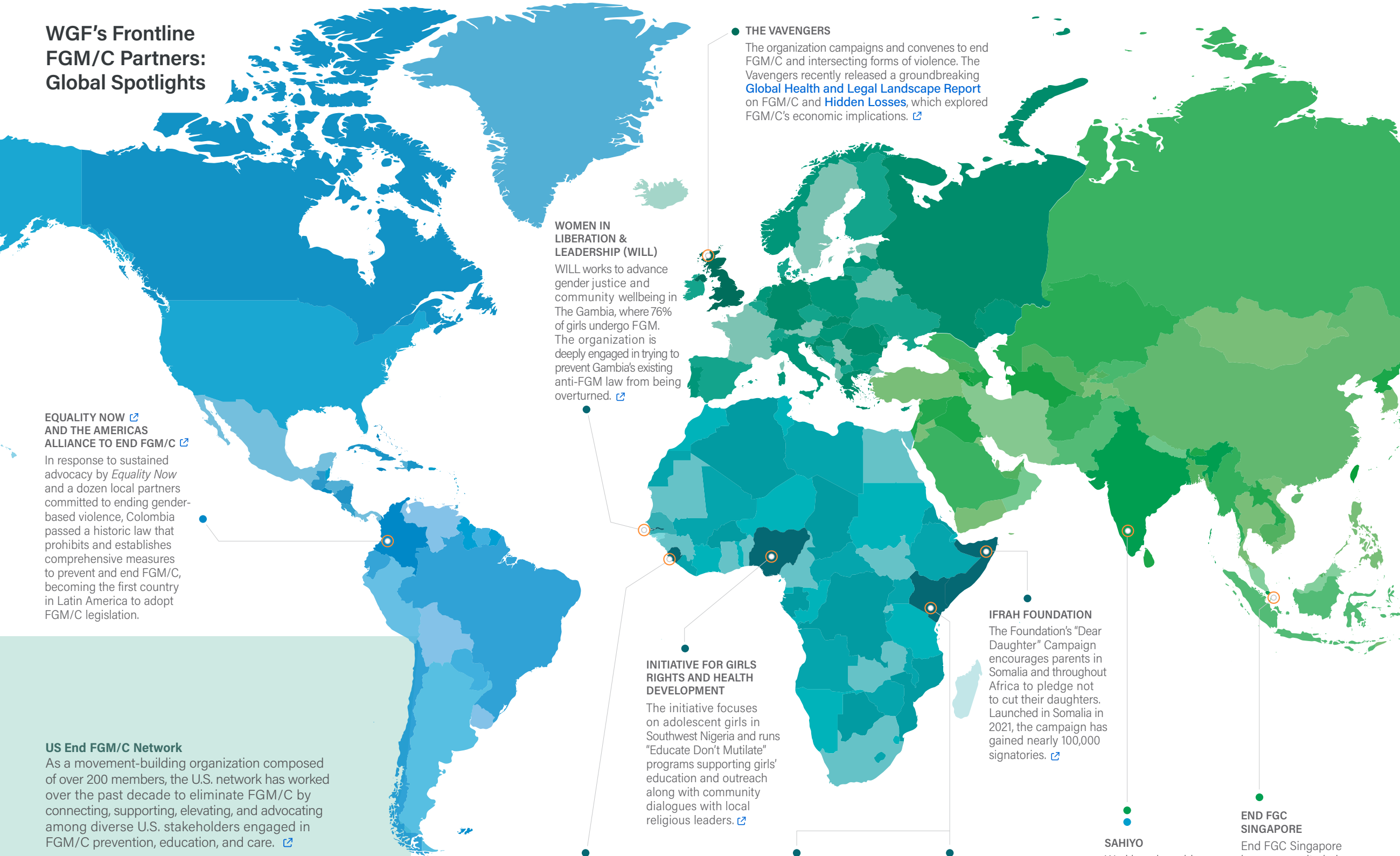
MILLION

for Frontline End FGM/C Movement.



Over 230 million women and girls worldwide have endured female genital mutilation, including over 144 million in Africa, 80 million in Asia, and 6 million in the Middle East. Donor funding has been profoundly misaligned with the scale and urgency of the challenge—particularly for work led by frontline activists and survivors. However, a growing global movement to end FGM/C is breaking the silence, building momentum, and fighting for change.

WGF’s Frontline
FGM/C Partners:
Global Spotlights



EQUALITY NOW [AND THE AMERICAS ALLIANCE TO END FGM/C \[AND THE AMERICAS ALLIANCE TO END FGM/C\]\(#\)](#)
In response to sustained advocacy by *Equality Now* and a dozen local partners committed to ending gender-based violence, Colombia passed a historic law that prohibits and establishes comprehensive measures to prevent and end FGM/C, becoming the first country in Latin America to adopt FGM/C legislation.

WOMEN IN LIBERATION & LEADERSHIP (WILL)
WILL works to advance gender justice and community wellbeing in The Gambia, where 76% of girls undergo FGM. The organization is deeply engaged in trying to prevent Gambia's existing anti-FGM law from being overturned. [WILL](#)

THE VAVENGERS
The organization campaigns and convenes to end FGM/C and intersecting forms of violence. The Vavengers recently released a groundbreaking [Global Health and Legal Landscape Report](#) on FGM/C and [Hidden Losses](#), which explored FGM/C's economic implications. [The Vavengers](#)

INITIATIVE FOR GIRLS RIGHTS AND HEALTH DEVELOPMENT
The initiative focuses on adolescent girls in Southwest Nigeria and runs "Educate Don't Mutilate" programs supporting girls' education and outreach along with community dialogues with local religious leaders. [Initiative for Girls Rights and Health Development](#)

AMAZONIAN INITIATIVE MOVEMENT
Founded by Rugiatu Neneh Turay in 2000, the movement promotes "bloodless bondo" as a safe alternative to FGM/C and operates a national network in Sierra Leone to investigate FGM/C-related deaths, pushing local police forces to seek justice and accountability. [Amazonian Initiative Movement](#)

KAKENYA'S DREAM
Founded as a single school for Maasai girls in a region where nearly 80% of girls undergo FGM/C, Kakenya's Dream has expanded its programs to empower girls, end FGM/C and child marriage, and transform rural communities in Kenya. [Kakenya's Dream](#)

I-REP FOUNDATION
Advocates for a future where all women and girls in Kenya's West Pokot region live free from violence, discrimination, and FGM and other harmful practices. Founder Domtila Chesang champions "survivor-led, feminist solutions that are as bold as they are necessary." [I-Rep Foundation](#)

IFRAH FOUNDATION
The Foundation's "Dear Daughter" Campaign encourages parents in Somalia and throughout Africa to pledge not to cut their daughters. Launched in Somalia in 2021, the campaign has gained nearly 100,000 signatories. [Ifrah Foundation](#)

SAHIYO
Working alongside Asian and diaspora communities, Sahiyo works to end FGM/C by supporting community dialogue, digital storytelling workshops, research, and survivor-centered media training in more than 19 countries. [Sahiyo](#)

END FGC SINGAPORE
End FGC Singapore is a community-led movement working to empower Muslim communities in Singapore to end FGM/C. FGM/C is estimated to affect between 75% and 85% of women in Singapore's Malay and Dawoodi Bohra communities. [End FGC Singapore](#)

Regional End FGM/C
Networks

End FGM European Network
Made up of 42 European organizations spanning 16 European countries, the network is committed to sustaining European action to end FGM/C and to elevating survivor and community voices working to end the practice. [End FGM European Network](#)

Asia Network to End FGM/C
This network unites organizations working to end FGM/C across 12 Asian countries as it builds a sustainable, evidence-driven, and locally led movement to end FGM/C in Asia. [Asia Network to End FGM/C](#)

End FGM Canada Network
The network's vision is a Canada free from FGM/C where affected women and girls are well supported and girls at risk are protected. Its trauma-informed training modules are used within affected communities across Canada. [End FGM Canada Network](#)

US End FGM/C Network
As a movement-building organization composed of over 200 members, the U.S. network has worked over the past decade to eliminate FGM/C by connecting, supporting, elevating, and advocating among diverse U.S. stakeholders engaged in FGM/C prevention, education, and care. [US End FGM/C Network](#)

African Women's Rights Advocates
AWRA is a Pan-African movement led by African women to advance the rights, dignity, and freedom of women and girls. Through its flagship Sister to Sister network, AWRA advances FGM/C advocacy and intergenerational dialogues throughout Africa and beyond. [African Women's Rights Advocates](#)

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Henry A. Wallace believed that no society can prosper by destroying the natural foundations on which it depends, and Wallace Global Fund has always placed the protection of the natural world and the pursuit of climate justice at the heart of its mission. In recent years, the climate crisis has accelerated, and the fossil fuel industry has used its immense financial resources to tighten its grip on political institutions worldwide. WGF has made breaking this power a central focus of its work, primarily through its support for the fossil fuel divestment movement. The story of WGF's involvement in this movement illustrates WGF's strategic approach and its mutually reinforcing priorities: challenging corporate power, building the movement power needed to confront it, and placing youth leadership at the vanguard of change.



Advocating for a Healthy Planet

Henry A. Wallace's son, Bob Wallace, carried forward his father's vision that economies should develop with care and respect for the ecological commons. He made environmental protection and sustainable development defining priorities of WGF. During the 1980s and 1990s, structural adjustment and austerity programs, as well as development lending, unleashed waves of public service cuts and opened natural resources to exploitation in the Global South.²⁸ Under the banner of development, communities were displaced and ecosystems gutted, and development finance became a vehicle for extracting wealth and resources. Countries were left indebted, and local communities were stuck bearing development's massive social and ecological costs. WGF supported pioneering organizations, including the Rainforest Action Network and the World Resources Institute, that defended communities and ecosystems, fought destructive development projects, and worked to hold the World Bank and international financial order accountable.

In 1995, WGF built on this early work with the launch of a refreshed Environment Program. It was based on an integrated vision of sustainability in which environmental protection was understood to be inseparable from economic justice, corporate accountability, and the well-being of communities.

The Turn to Climate Action

By the early 2000s, it was increasingly clear that the continued burning of fossil fuels was speeding the world toward ecological catastrophe.²⁹ Heeding the urgency of the moment, WGF expanded its support for the organizations and movements at the

forefront of climate action. This included funding groundbreaking campaigns against the continued expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and supporting advocacy efforts to strengthen the climate science community and advance renewable energy.

By 2010, despite the vigorous efforts of climate activists, attempts at meaningful government-based climate action had completely disintegrated. The United Nations Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen had ended in failure, and efforts to pass a comprehensive U.S. climate bill collapsed when the Waxman–Markey Act (American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, H.R. 2454) did not even advance to a vote in the Senate.^{30,31} After years of effort, one thing was crystal clear: Political systems were incapable of producing any meaningful response to the climate crisis. In the wake of these setbacks, the climate advocacy community was left demoralized and scattered.

At the time, climate activism existed in disconnected pockets of climate advocacy, policy, and frontline community organizing. Philanthropic foundations had poured tens of millions of dollars into promoting settled science and millions more into communicating that science.^{32,33,34} Additional millions had been spent attempting to pass comprehensive policy in the U.S. and globally.³⁵ Youth activists had been encouraged to lobby for public policy *du jour* over targeting the industries responsible for the degradation of the planet. And each step of the way, the expenditures of “fossil fuel and transportation corporations, utilities,

and affiliated trade associations” on climate denialism and lobbying for industry-friendly laws and regulations “dwarf those of environmental organizations,” NGOs, and philanthropy.³⁶ It was clear that climate advocacy needed a new way forward—one that moved beyond NGO advocacy, beyond traditional policy debates, and beyond backroom negotiations between politicians and corporations.

It was also becoming clear that the principal obstacle to climate action was neither a lack of scientific evidence nor a lack of public concern. It lay in the political and economic power of the fossil fuel industry itself. As long as the industry's grip over governments and public institutions remained intact, meaningful climate action would be nearly impossible. What was needed were new strategies capable of directly confronting the industry's power. The moment was ripe for new ideas, and, as so often in history, youth would plant the seed.

A Strategy to Break Fossil Power

After the collapse of government-led action, Wallace Global Fund recognized that philanthropy had to do more; it was necessary to help build the power needed to confront the fossil fuel industry and push for a just climate future. WGF supported the emerging field of climate litigation, backing legal innovators, attribution science, and early court cases that laid the foundations for holding fossil fuel companies accountable for climate damages. Yet accountability through the courts formed only part of the response. What was needed was a strategy that could build broad-based grassroots capacity capable of challenging fossil fuel power from the ground up and translating that capacity into policy change. Fossil fuel divestment offered precisely that entry point.

The Seeds of Change

In 2010, WGF began exploring whether divestment could channel growing disenchantment with political failure into a new form of public action. That year, WGF supported cutting-edge research by As You Sow and CoalSwarm aimed at turning divestment into a credible campaign by establishing the case against coal, identifying clear corporate culprits, and developing an organizing model that students could carry onto their campuses.

WGF's exploration of divestment was unfolding alongside a related strategic evolution at Swarthmore College. Their Mountain Justice coalition, formed in 2010 after students witnessed mountaintop-removal mining impacting Appalachian communities, began planning a campaign to press Swarthmore to divest its endowment from fossil fuels—and joined allied actions (led by the Earth Quaker Action Team) targeting financial institutions like PNC Bank over its financing of mountaintop removal.^{37, 38} In June 2011, WGF and As You Sow brought these emerging strands together, convening the campaign's architects and its first student organizers through the Sierra Student Coalition, the Responsible Endowments Coalition, and the Energy Action Coalition.^{39,40} The organizers represented many campuses, including Swarthmore, the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, and Earlham College. At WGF's headquarters in Washington, D.C., this collective of savvy organizers initiated the first coordinated divestment strategy. Campaigners initially focused on the “Filthy Fifteen”—fifteen of the largest publicly traded coal companies in the United States—giving students a powerful demand they could take directly to university trustees. While most campuses pursued coal divestment, Swarthmore continued to push for full fossil fuel divestment.





THEORY OF CHANGE

Drawing on the lessons of the global anti-apartheid movement, where divestment was used as a form of people's sanctions against the racist South African state, climate divestment allows individuals and coalitions to pressure institutions with which they have a relationship, for example, universities, pension funds, faith organizations, and local governments, to divest investments from fossil fuel assets. Because people everywhere are connected to pools of fossil fuel capital, the strategy can be repeated across institutions, sectors, and geographies, transforming individual campaigns into a movement that builds collective power.

The divestment theory of change has three mutually reinforcing parts. **First**, divestment works to strip away the fossil fuel industry's social license to operate by making continued investment in fossil fuels morally, financially, and politically untenable. **Second**, divestment and investment work together to weaken industry power and build alternatives. Movement-based campaigns pressure the institutions that finance, own, and legitimize the industry to withdraw their support, while philanthropic foundations and institutional investors redirect capital toward climate solutions, build the financial tools needed for the clean-energy transition, and

expand markets for renewable energy. **Third**, every campaign builds movement power by organizing young people across institutions into a broad political constituency capable of confronting corporate power, shifting markets, and ultimately creating the political conditions for ambitious climate action. Divestment, as such, is a means to tip the scales of power by building grassroots strength while eroding the capital from which the fossil fuel industry draws its own power.

A Growing Movement

In the months after the convening in Washington, the pilot campuses became the first test bed for the emerging strategy. Organizers returned to their campuses with a shared approach, adapting it to their own institutions. These pioneering efforts became living laboratories in which students tested organizing models, arguments, and campaign demands.

Divestment activism spread rapidly beyond the original pilots. Students were transforming university endowments into sites of political struggle, confronting trustees and administrators with a moral question: Should institutions dedicated to preparing young people for the future profit from an industry destroying that same future?

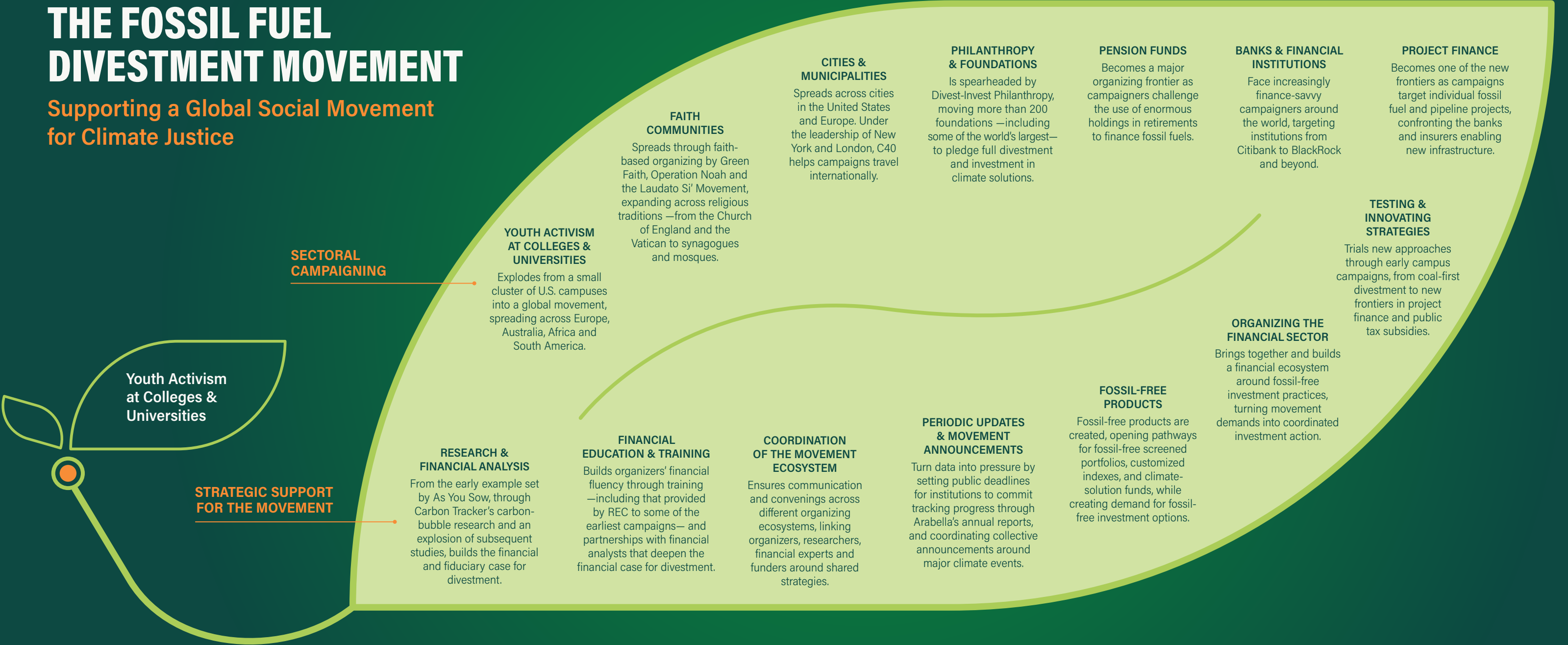
The divestment movement was supercharged with the publication of Bill McKibben's essay, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math."⁴¹ In a pathbreaking analysis, McKibben combined the moral case for divestment with Carbon Tracker's *Carbon Bubble Analysis*, which argued most known fossil fuel reserves would have to stay underground if catastrophic warming were to be avoided.⁴² Fossil fuel companies were not simply polluters, they were businesses whose existence depended on reserves that could never safely be burned. After this, divestment was no longer framed solely as a moral campaign; it also became a compelling financial and fiduciary case against investment in the fossil fuel industry.

By the end of 2012, divestment campaigns had taken root at nearly fifty universities across the country. When McKibben and 350.org launched the Do the Math tour in November 2012, they called on student groups across the country to organize and demand change from their college administrators, and the movement's growth exploded. Within weeks of the Do the Math tour there were more than 190 campaigns across North America. By the end of 2013, 945 divestment campaigns had been launched, including campaigns at 362 college campuses and involving more than 9,200 campus organizers. In little more than a year, the number of university campaigns had multiplied nearly tenfold.⁴³

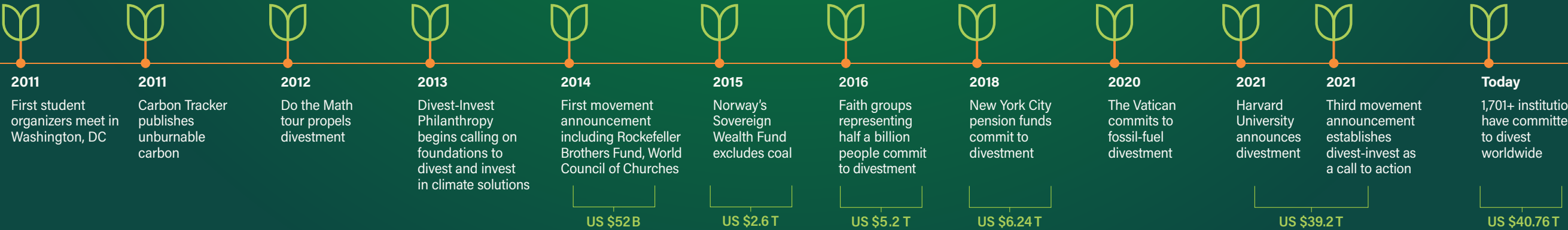
With this explosive growth, divestment began to branch into new sectors, including faith communities, cities, philanthropies, and pension funds. It also traveled beyond the United States to Europe, Australia, Africa, and Latin America.⁴⁴ Each new frontier generated new forms of organizing and new sources of leverage, transforming divestment into a truly global, many-headed movement.

THE FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT MOVEMENT

Supporting a Global Social Movement for Climate Justice



KEY MOMENTS



ASSETS REPRESENTED BY DIVESTMENT COMMITMENTS (USD)

The Movement Branches Out

From its rapid spread across university campuses in the 2010s, the divestment movement branched into new sectors, each bringing its own organizers, institutions, and sources of leverage. As campaigns multiplied, the movement not only grew, it moved from mission-driven institutions toward powerful financial actors controlling ever-larger pools of capital.

Faith communities

Faith-based organizing grounded divestment in traditions of ethical investment, moral stewardship, and responsibility for creation, strengthening the overall movement’s moral authority.

EXAMPLE: GreenFaith organized across churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith communities; Operation Noah’s Bright Now campaign carried divestment through British churches and into the Church of England; and the Laudato Si’ Movement coordinated Catholic commitments, mobilized religious orders, and engaged Vatican decision-makers.⁴⁵

Cities and municipalities

Municipal campaigns used public assets and pension funds to align cities’ investments with their climate commitments.

EXAMPLE: Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn became an early municipal champion, while local coalitions secured commitments in San Francisco, Berlin, and Sydney. In New York, sustained campaigning by 350NYC and allied organizations helped secure one of the world’s largest municipal commitments.⁴⁶ New York and London later co-led C40’s Divest-Invest initiative, spreading divestment and renewable energy across cities globally.⁴⁷

Pension funds

Pension funds became a major organizing frontier because they controlled vast pools of long-term capital. Campaigners presented divestment as a fiduciary response to the financial risks of fossil-fuel dependence.

EXAMPLE: Organizers targeted New York City’s five pension funds and the Netherlands’ ABP, securing commitments from two major public retirement systems to sell substantial fossil-fuel holdings.⁴⁸

Banks and financial institutions

Organizers targeted the institutions providing capital to the fossil fuel industry at massive scale.

EXAMPLE: Launched in 2020, Stop the Money Pipeline united more than 200 organizations and coordinated campaigns targeting Citi, BlackRock, Vanguard, and major insurers over their support for the industry.^{49,50}

Project finance

In the 2020s, campaigns increasingly sought to stop individual fossil-fuel projects by pressuring prospective banks, insurers, investors, and public financial institutions to withhold support.

EXAMPLE: Both ENDS and Urgewald have supported campaigns targeting the financiers of destructive projects, while the StopEACOP alliance pressured the remaining prospective backers of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.⁵¹ The campaign saw more than forty banks and some thirty insurers rule out supporting the project, even as construction proceeded.

Public tax subsidies

Campaigners also are targeting the tax breaks, preferential rates, and public spending sustaining fossil fuel production, extending the movement into government budgets and tax policy.

EXAMPLE: Launched in 2025, the United to End Polluter Handouts coalition first mobilized to prevent any expansion of federal fossil fuel subsidies and then to eliminate them altogether, while challenging federal giveaways as governments faced mounting budget crises.⁵²

WGF and its funding partners strategically supported the divestment movement’s spread into new sectors by identifying and funding activist organizations capable of leading new frontiers of organizing, helping them scale their work, broaden their reach, and carry the movement across geographies.



Wallace Global Fund's Support for the Divestment Movement

The growth and development of fossil fuel divestment illustrates the catalytic power unleashed by social movements. This power was multiplied by many forms of support: network structures that could connect a growing ecosystem of advocacy organizations; ongoing training for activist leaders; new research documenting the movement's growth and impact; financial screening tools and fossil-free investment products; and communications strategies, media events, and public announcements that amplified the movement's reach. At times, solidarity also meant meeting organizers' most practical needs, from supporting student travel to national meetings to build unified power, and even organizing pizza for campus rallies.

As with its support of the movement to end FGM/C, WGF took an interconnected approach to supporting the movement as a whole.

Research and financial analysis

WGF supported the research, data, and analytical tools needed to show that fossil fuel holdings created material financial risks and could conflict with fiduciary responsibilities.

EXAMPLE: WGF supported As You Sow's early coal divestment analysis and CoalSwarm's research on corporate targets. It later supported Carbon Tracker's company and market analysis and IEEFA's investigations of vulnerable coal companies, power plants, and mining projects in India, Australia, and Europe.⁵³

Training organizers

WGF funded organizations that equipped campaigners to engage trustees and chief investment officers on endowment governance, portfolio management and fiduciary duty, allowing them to anticipate objections and develop credible proposals.

EXAMPLE: WGF supported the Responsible Endowments Coalition, the Energy Action Coalition, and Green Corps in providing campaign materials, financial training, and paid campus organizers.

Coordinating the movement ecosystem

WGF supported development of networks through which organizations could exchange lessons and align strategies as divestment spread across sectors and countries.

EXAMPLE: WGF provided sustained support to 350.org as it connected campaigns internationally. In 2014, WGF also convened organizations leading different parts of the movement, helping establish the Divest-Invest Network and prepare the first coordinated global announcement of commitments. Later, WGF also supported Financing the Future, the first major divest-invest summit held in the Global South, which convened in Cape Town in 2019.⁵⁴

Periodic updates and announcements

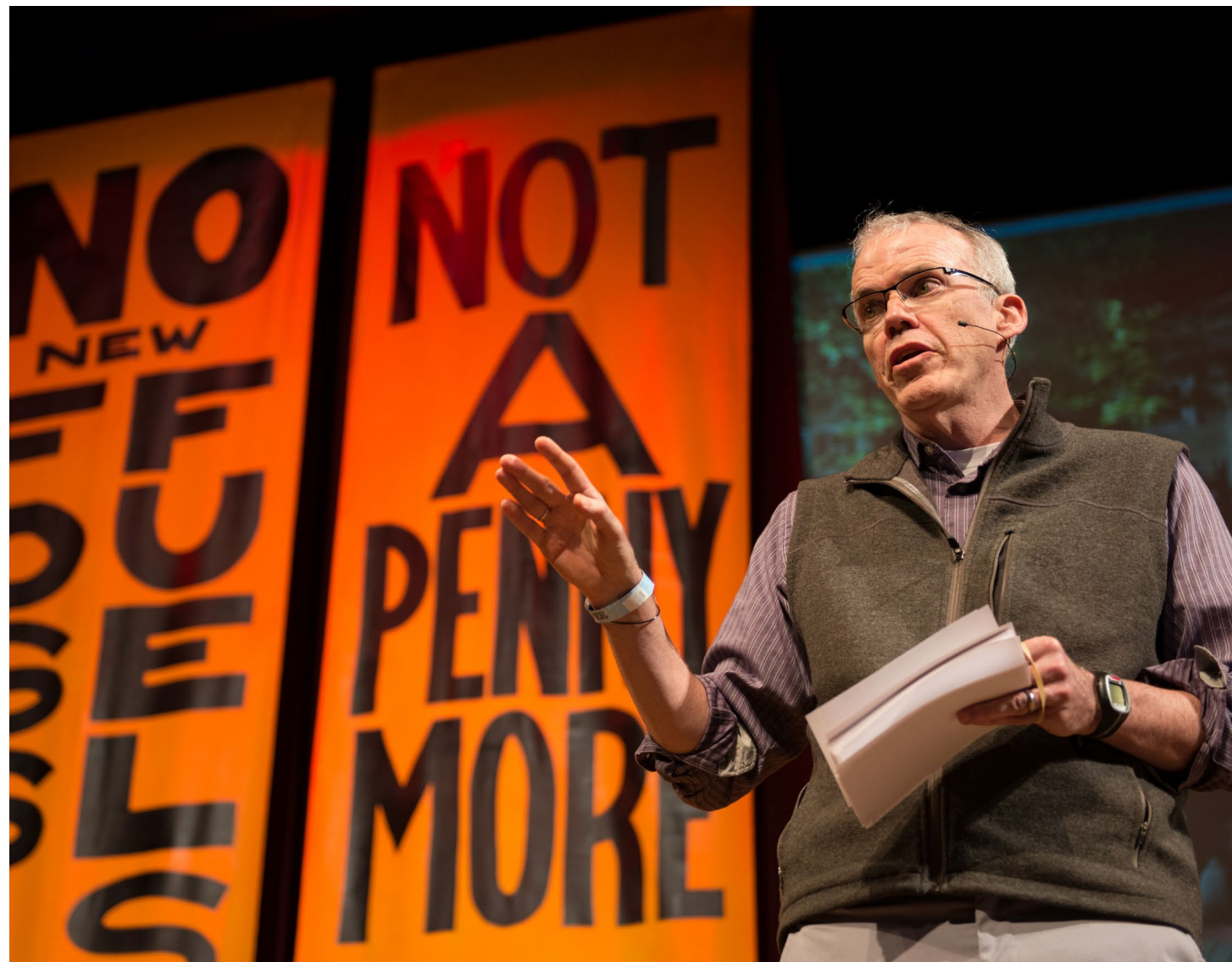
WGF supported reports and coordinated announcements that placed local victories within a wider account of movement growth, created deadlines for new commitments, and gave organizers shared evidence of progress.

EXAMPLE: Over successive years, WGF supported movement reports alongside coordinated public announcements around major climate events. Arabella Advisors produced the first reports, beginning ahead of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's 2014 Climate Summit with a report documenting 181 institutions and local governments, along with more than 650 individuals, representing over \$50 billion in assets under management, that had committed to divestment.⁵⁵ This accompanied a New York announcement featuring commitments from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the World Council of Churches, and the University of Dayton.⁵⁶ The cycle continued as the movement grew, culminating in Stand.earth's 2021 report documenting 1,485 institutions across 71 countries, representing nearly \$40 trillion in assets under management, committed to divestment.⁵⁷

Organizing the financial sector

WGF worked to turn investors into organized participants in the global movement, helping foundations and other asset owners share knowledge, overcome institutional barriers, and make coordinated divest-invest commitments.

EXAMPLE: In January 2014, WGF launched Divest-Invest Philanthropy with 17 foundations holding nearly \$1.8 billion in assets.⁵⁸ The initiative later secured commitments from more than 200 foundations with continued organizing. WGF helped spread the model globally through Divest-Invest Europe and Divest-Invest Australia, to carry the work forward across global philanthropy.



IMPACT

Fertile Ground for a Better Future

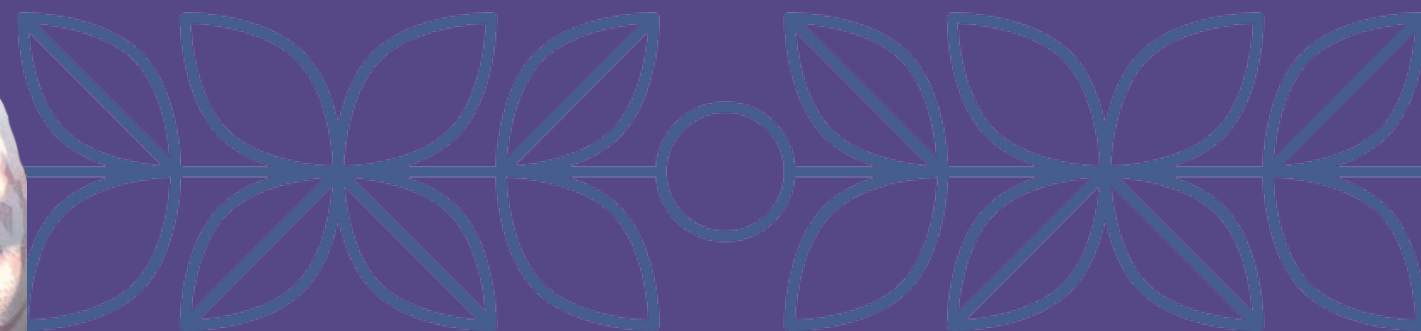


Global social movements are rare. Looking back over the past fifteen years of fossil fuel divestment activism, it is clear that the movement’s remarkable growth was made possible by thousands of students, organizers, researchers, frontline communities, faith leaders, philanthropies, and institutions that carried the movement forward and kept it vital.

The divestment movement’s story reminds us that profound change emerges from the fontlines. The movement has trained a generation of new climate leaders, strengthened movement leadership, shifted markets, and changed public policy. Most crucially, it has mounted the most powerful challenge the fossil fuel industry has ever faced. All this work and all these victories have opened space for bolder and more ambitious climate action. The fossil fuel industry has been weakened and pushed onto the defensive, while a generation of movement leaders has emerged ever more experienced, connected, and capable of building power. The ground is fertile to grow a new generation of activists who are ready to push further, hold the industry to greater account, and fight for a transformative and just transition to a collective, sustainable future. If they are to succeed, they will need philanthropic partners to provide bold, patient, and long-term support.

JUST TRANSITIONS AFRICA

An exciting chapter in the history of people-powered movements is being written by activists across Africa. These frontline leaders are driving a shift in power away from top-down government solutions and large NGOs in capital cities and toward community-based organizations developing local capacity and agency.⁵⁹ They are joining with other activist-powered organizations across the continent to form dynamic and innovative trans-African networks in support of democratic change.⁶⁰



This work, collected under the heading “Just Transitions,” has two components. First, it refers to the sociopolitical transitions necessary for societies to redistribute political and economic power away from captured governments and to functioning democratic institutions that deliver justice for the people. Second, it refers to the systems change necessary to respond to the climate crisis, most notably moving away from extractive, polluting, and exploitative economic and energy models and toward renewable energy systems.

The movements and networks engaged in this work are building justice-centered solutions and developing new forms of political power in their communities. This innovative local democratic infrastructure and these growing Pan-African social movements are becoming models for democratic activists around the world.

The Start of the Just Transitions Story: Post-Apartheid South Africa

Democracy in post-apartheid South Africa was fragile. Political freedom had been won, but millions continued to face entrenched inequality, environmental injustice, and the abuse of public power. To build a truly just and equitable society, the country’s democratic institutions needed the support of a vibrant civil society capable of holding government and corporations accountable.

Beginning in 2006 and driven by the interest of Scott and Christy Wallace, WGF partnered with South African organizations and movement leaders working to strengthen civic participation, advance women’s rights, defend human rights, expand public interest law, and pursue social and environmental justice. In line with its theory of change, WGF prioritized supporting the long-term capacity of grassroots and local civil society organizations within Southern Africa to shape its democratic future.

Pan-African Movement Building and Formation

Wallace Global Fund, in collaboration with funding partner TrustAfrica, prioritized pro-democracy work in Zimbabwe by helping to launch the Zimbabwe Alliance in 2009. To ensure that the country’s democratic transition served all of its citizens, the alliance focused on shifting the resources that historically had flowed to Harare-based NGOs to small movement and community groups not traditionally able to receive funding and to link them together for a national change agenda.

In the years of partnership to follow, the Zimbabwe Alliance re-granted more than \$578,000 to

community organizations across the country. These investments strengthened citizen movements working to defend democratic freedoms, advance socioeconomic and climate justice, and hold the government accountable to the people. The alliance launched the Citizens Manifesto Initiative that has become one of Zimbabwe’s most visible platforms for citizen-led advocacy. The initiative united diverse organizations around a common vision for democratic renewal and people-centered governance. As civic space continued to shrink ahead of Zimbabwe’s 2023 elections, the alliance doubled down on investing in organizers—particularly women and young people, the

country’s two largest demographic groups. Through training in constitutional literacy, advocacy, community organizing, public safety, and political economy, a new generation of movement leaders has gained the tools to organize effectively under increasingly difficult political conditions.

The Birth of the African Social Movements Baraza

The next stage in the development of the Just Transitions work focused on supporting the growth of Pan-African social movements. Continuing the partnership with TrustAfrica, Wallace Global Fund supported the emergence of solidarity spaces across the continent.

WGF expanded its support to include campaigns challenging fossil fuel expansion and nuclear energy. Among its early partners were Earthlife Africa and the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (SAFCEI), who helped build an unprecedented coalition to oppose the South African government’s secret nuclear agreement with Russia.

Combining grassroots organizing, public education, and strategic litigation, the coalition achieved a historic victory on April 26, 2017, when Western Cape’s High Court ruled the proposed \$76 billion nuclear deal unconstitutional.^{61,62} The decision not only halted one of the largest planned nuclear expansions in the world, but also affirmed the importance of transparency, public participation, and democratic accountability during a pivotal moment in South Africa’s young democracy.

For their leadership, Makoma Lekalakala of Earthlife Africa and Liz McDaid⁶³ of SAFCEI were jointly awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in recognition of a campaign that reshaped South Africa’s energy future and inspired environmental justice movements around the world.⁶⁴



The first major milestone in this effort was the birth of the African Social Movements Baraza. Convened in Zimbabwe in 2018 under the theme People Power: Reimagining the Future, Organizing for Social Change, it brought together more than 100 organizers, funders, academics, and movement leaders representing over 60 movements from 20 African countries. This gathering of social movements from all corners of the continent aimed to re-envision progressive struggles related to democracy and civic space, human rights, economic justice, and the just transition agenda. This and subsequent Barazas have provided opportunities for new collaborations, joint campaigns, and building critical solidarity for movements most at threat.⁶⁵

Connecting Movement Leaders

In addition to supporting new Pan-African movement formations, Wallace Global Fund also partnered with and directly supported effective leaders who were experimenting with diverse models of activism at the intersection of environmental, social and economic justice, culture, and corporate accountability.

In 2016, a group of civil society leaders convened a historic meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, to build a new platform for Pan-African advocacy, coordination, and movement building. Attended by 272 delegates from more than 40 African countries, the convening produced the Kilimanjaro Declaration, whose signers committed to building local, national, continental, and global campaigns that expand civic education, advance gender justice, and demand ecological and ethical governance across Africa and the diaspora.⁶⁶

The convening also led to the creation of Africans Rising, whose mission is building a movement where power rests in the hands of the “young ones coming tomorrow.” This mission centers culture, feminism, equity, and justice. Despite limited philanthropic funding, the movement has grown to include more than 1,000 partner organizations. It



has also established the continent’s largest annual mobilization of grassroots organizations, trade unions, community groups, women’s organizations, faith groups, youth groups, local associations, media, and individuals to take collective action on issues affecting local communities and the continent as a whole. The 2026 mobilizations took place across all 54 African countries.

The African Water Justice Network

Another chapter in new African social movement formations began in March 2021 at the Alternative World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal. Featuring participants such as Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), Africans Rising, and the Blue Planet Project, the forum was designed to counter the corporate-driven World Water Forum and challenge the growing corporate agenda around water privatization in Africa. With funding from WGF, the forum led to the creation of the Africa Water Justice Network (AWJN). Since its formation, AWJN has rapidly positioned itself at the forefront of the fight for equitable access to water, environmental justice, and social justice across the continent. The network has strengthened national water justice platforms, which has

enabled communities to more effectively resist water financialization policies and defend water as a public good.⁶⁷

SHINE Collab: Gender-Just Climate Solutions Through Energy Access

As the demand for shifting away from fossil fuels to renewable energy has grown across Africa, government- and corporate-led approaches have predictably prioritized top-down, large-scale renewable energy projects that risk reinforcing existing disparities in political and economic power. Additionally, as governments have focused on large projects to reduce emissions, advocates have raised the alarm that these projects will continue to overlook last-mile energy access, a pressing need throughout the continent. Since over **600 million** people across Africa still lack access to electricity, advocates see a unique opportunity to leapfrog fossil-fueled grid infrastructure.⁶⁸ They want to replace such mega-projects with small, hyper-local distributed renewable energy systems. They believe such local systems are better positioned to bring power to communities in a way that would positively affect safety, health care, education, and economic opportunities.

To take advantage of this opportunity, and to advance the cause of climate justice and decentralized power, the SHINE Collab was created by Sustainable Energy for All, GreenFaith, and WGF to be a women-led and -centered campaign to champion last-mile energy access across Africa. SHINE highlights the leadership of women fighting the expansion of the fossil fuel industry and defending their communities from its harmful impacts. It supports activists who are demanding community safeguards around large-scale renewable energy and transition mineral projects and also working to build businesses and policies that ensure a universal energy transition that reaches communities that have no access today.

In Africa, the effects of the lack of access to clean and affordable power fall most heavily on women. At the same time, as community-scaled energy systems come online, women are some of the main beneficiaries of these developments and are in a prime position to build businesses facilitated by new access to energy. SHINE Collab has devoted significant effort to helping women seize these new opportunities: It has galvanized government and private investment, while ensuring the participation of local communities in decision-making about the creation of small-scale solar and wind systems.

Expanding its initiatives in new countries, SHINE Collab recently launched in Bikita, Zimbabwe, the **Just Transitions Hub**, a women-led, ecofeminist space reimagining energy, livelihoods, and justice from the ground up. The hub enables women to share resources, build locally driven alternatives, and strengthen their collective power to shape broader just energy transitions. From solar-powered food processing to improved water access and creative production, every element of the Hub reflects what the participating women have identified as essential to sustaining livelihoods, reducing labor burdens, and restoring community autonomy.

Through these and other projects, SHINE Collab is bringing the African women's movement more fully into the global climate movement. They have articulated a vision of an energy transition characterized by women-led strategies to get off fossil fuels and empower communities to chart a new energy and political future.

Fossil Fuel Organizing in Southern Africa

In South Africa, Just Transitions has the potential to emerge as a powerful model for how communities, grounded in diverse local and regional contexts, can come together to amplify their voices, build collective power, and steer system change in ways that benefit all. As the country confronts escalating climate impacts, chronic electricity failures, and the planned decommissioning of coal-fired power stations and oil refineries, powerful economic interests are working to control and slow the transition.

At the same time, communities, workers, and environmental justice leaders are organizing for a rapid, people-centered transformation that redistributes power, resources, and opportunity.

At the center of this movement is a coalition of civil society organizations that Wallace Global Fund has partnered with for more than a decade: Earthlife Africa (ELA), Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), groundWork, and South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA). Together, these organizations have spent years advancing community-led solutions to South Africa's energy and climate challenges. Since 2016, they have led the [Life After Coal campaign](#), successfully stopping 13 proposed coal-fired power stations while advancing an Open Agenda for a Just Transition centered on gender justice, democratic participation, and community power.⁶⁹

These organizations also played a leading role in shaping South Africa's national Just Transition framework through the Presidential Climate Commission, a stakeholder body bringing together government, business, labor, and civil society to develop the country's climate and Just Transition agenda. Recognizing the need for a stronger community voice, leaders from WGF's partner organizations developed the [Just Transition Open Agenda](#), which was released in May 2022. The agenda set out the actions needed to achieve a truly just transition while calling for a national process grounded in dialogue, open debate, and democratic decision-making.

THE COMMUNITY JUST TRANSITIONS FUND AND CENTERS (CJTF)

Building on decades of collaboration, WGF's South African partners are launching the [Community Just Transition Centers and Fund](#) (CJTF), a participatory, community-owned financing and support mechanism for locally led Just Transition and climate resilience initiatives.

Formally launched in June 2026, the CJTF will prioritize, finance, and support community-driven projects emerging from Community Just Transition Centers across South Africa. By supporting a strategic and diverse portfolio of visible, locally grounded projects, the CJTF can ensure that communities most affected by the energy transition have the resources and power to shape their own futures and demonstrate credible and scalable post-carbon just and regenerative pathways. The initiative will finance projects that build social and ecological resilience, restore ecosystems,

create dignified livelihoods, and deliver direct benefits to affected communities. Managed through a collaborative, participatory governance process, the CJTF will emphasize continuous learning that values success and failure as essential components of building effective, community-led transition pathways.

While every center is run differently and responds to issues based on local context, the Soweto Center has emerged as a shining star in an exciting constellation of centers across the country. It is a women-led organizing hub that draws on the experiences and partnership of Earthlife Africa and the SHINE Collab. The participants have built a space that harnesses sustainable energy while equipping communities with the knowledge, tools, and collective power needed to drive a socially just energy transition. The center was established through a community consultation process that identified and supported a group of women community leaders to guide the initiative alongside a dedicated project coordinator. It is envisioned as a space for organizing across all dimensions of community development, including education on just transition principles and the identification of local priorities. It will also train organizers to identify and advance community-driven projects,

build a unified voice around shared needs, and support the deployment of distributed solar systems. These systems are potent, community-enhancing projects because they deliver reliable and affordable energy for households and businesses (including women-led enterprises) and support reliable access to clean water.

The Community Just Transition Centers and Fund are the culmination of decades of community-powered activism supported by Wallace Global Fund. It is imperative we ensure that this activism can continue to power progress for years to come. For this reason, and in anticipation of our departure from the field, WGF has taken steps to strengthen the long-term viability of the CJTF by strategically positioning the initiative before philanthropic audiences. These efforts have resulted in matching commitments from the Ford Foundation and the ClimateWorks Foundation—doubling our initial investment and expanding the Fund's visibility within broader donor networks.

As the world grapples with fossil fuel phaseout and communities fight to ensure their rights and agency are at the center of the transition, the CJTF is a powerful model for other countries across the globe, whether in the global South or North.



STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE



Extractive industries contribute to many of the defining challenges of our generation, including environmental destruction, crackdowns on democracy and human rights, racial and gender disparities, and widening economic inequality. In response, communities around the world have banded together in defense of the environment and against the extractive industries that pose these existential threats.

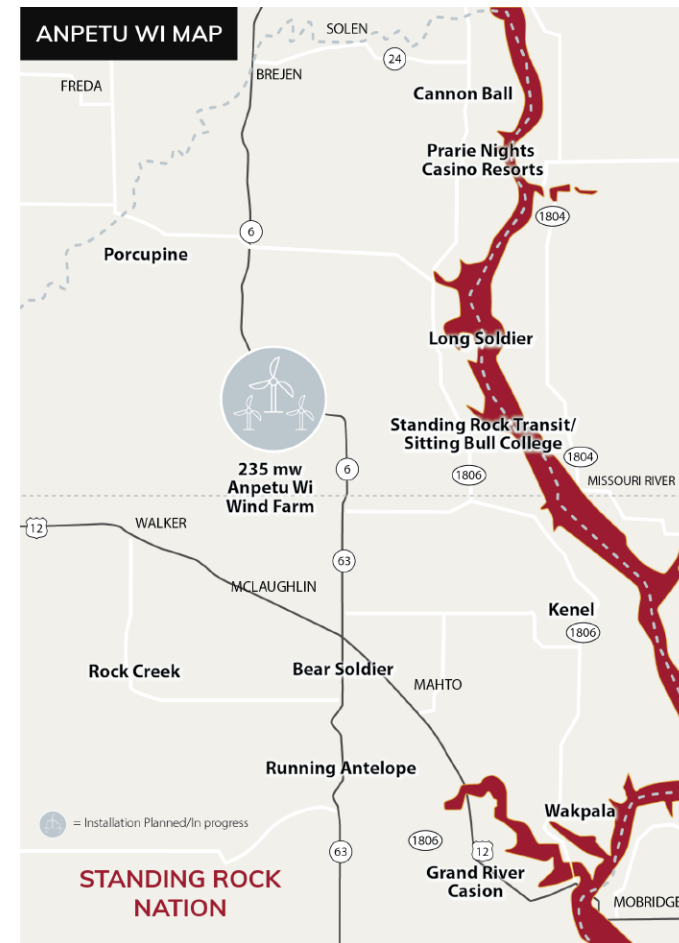
Few moments in recent history have captured global attention and generated widespread solidarity like the mobilization at Standing Rock. In the summer of 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation became the epicenter of the resistance movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline. This project was pushed forward by **Energy Transfer** without free, prior, and informed consent from the community even though it represented a clear threat to the Tribe's sacred sites and water supply.⁷⁰ What started as resistance by one Indigenous community grew quickly into a global movement that drew Indigenous people from around the world to Standing Rock in a unified peaceful protest against colonialism and extraction.

Once the mobilization wound down and the television cameras departed, there was a real risk that support for the Standing Rock community would dissipate, despite the fact that the Tribe's challenges, which are rooted in centuries of colonialism, broken treaties, and systemic racism, persisted.

As leaders in the Tribe began to develop strategies focused on building agency, economic opportunity, and investment in their community, Wallace Global Fund recognized that tribal members would have ongoing need for support. WGF worked with the tribal council to support its priorities for community-owned renewable energy, cultural programming, and community spaces. Initiated by a community standing up against a major corporation that was intent on forcing an unwanted project upon them, the relationship with WGF evolved into a long-term partnership to support the members of the Standing Rock community and their vision for a just and sustainable future.

Energy Sovereignty: Henry A. Wallace Award and Anpetu Wi Wind Farm

WGF established the Henry A. Wallace Award to honor movements that displayed extraordinary courage in opposing oppressive corporate and



political power. Given this purpose, it was fitting that the inaugural award would be presented to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in 2017 for its defense of sacred land and water against the Dakota Access Pipeline.⁷¹ The Tribe used the award's \$250,000 unrestricted grant to develop and strengthen its capacity to build renewable energy projects. WGF also pledged an additional \$1 million as catalytic seed capital for the development of the Anpetu Wi Wind Farm, a grid-scale wind farm developed and controlled by the Tribe.

Anpetu Wi Wind Farm is a powerful model of energy sovereignty—not just for tribes, but for communities around the world. In stark contrast to the Dakota Access Pipeline, it will generate renewable energy on the Tribe's own terms, pave the way for energy sovereignty and economic resilience, and create a pathway for the next generation to be active participants in and beneficiaries of the renewable energy economy.⁷²

Working closely with **SAGE Development Authority**, a Native-led organization leading the project, WGF convened mission-aligned investors and foundations to catalyze early project support. This allowed the Tribe to maintain an ownership model and maximize the eventual returns to the community.⁷³ With control of the project, the Tribe will be able to reinvest revenues into community priorities and programs, train tribal members, and build long-term self-determination.

This project has been a decade-long journey with both significant wins and many setbacks. Through all the ups and downs, WGF has been a steady partner. The wind farm's journey, however, is ongoing and needs funders who are willing to commit to partnership through political and economic shifts in service of a larger goal: creating a proof of concept for Indigenous-owned renewables and a model for frontline communities to unlock economic opportunity through direct ownership of the systems driving the transition to a green economy.

A New Organizing Model: Wozu

A second progressive outgrowth of the pipeline fight was the creation of Wozu, a nonprofit founded by Dave Archambault II, who was tribal chairman at the time of opposition to the pipeline.⁷⁴ The remarkable show of global solidarity that came with the Standing Rock peaceful protests had raised hopes for significant change. However, as the demonstrations demobilized and the construction of the pipeline continued, there was a need to reflect on rebuilding the community and strengthening its foundations, including in the realms of housing, education, and economic opportunity. Tribal members founded Wozu to harness the power of their community, including their youth members, and define priorities around regenerating the land, strengthening social connection, and revitalizing culture.

In Lakota, "Wozu" means "to plant" or "to seed." With WGF support, Wozu has pursued its mission

through several interconnected initiatives. Their food sovereignty work restores land to produce free, regeneratively farmed food to the community to mitigate food insecurity. Buffalo are raised on site; reintroduction of this keystone species to the grasslands has been vital to restoring natural ecosystems.⁷⁵ Social programming in the arts, language, and environmental stewardship strengthens the community's social fabric, while bike paths open the land to the public, encouraging movement and a deeper relationship with the environment. The organization's campus also hosts traditional ceremonies, creating a future in which youth can grow up grounded in their culture while gaining the skills and resources to find meaningful work in their own community.



What began as a global mobilization to resist a pipeline on Indigenous lands launched a decade-long (and growing) partnership between WGF and the people of Standing Rock in defense of sovereignty, culture, environment, and economic opportunity. Anpetu Wi and Wozu are reflections of a community whose strength, resilience, and creativity consistently model what a just and sustainable future can look like in spite of centuries of exploitation. At a moment when so much is being dismantled, initiatives like Anpetu Wi and Wozu are inspiring examples of what communities can build when they harness their collective power to resist unaccountable corporate and political power.

AGRO- ECOLOGY

Wallace Global Fund's support for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and their fight for sovereignty and environmental justice is one of the most prominent examples of WGF's commitment to agroecology. Rooted in Indigenous values, ecological regeneration, and community self-determination, agroecology reflects WGF's commitment to challenging corporate control of agriculture and working to reclaim the right of communities to define their own food and farming systems.





George Carver... introduced me to the mysteries of plant fertilization. Later on I was to have an intimate acquaintance with plants myself... that was partly because this scientist, who belonged to another race, had deepened my appreciation of plants in a way I could never forget.⁷⁷

—Henry A. Wallace

The fund's commitment to agroecology can be traced directly back to Henry A. Wallace's agricultural roots. Born and raised on an Iowa farm, Wallace appreciated the direct connection between a healthy natural world and a healthy community. His belief in racial justice was also informed by his experiences on his family farm and with agricultural science. When Wallace was a young boy, his family befriended George Washington Carver, then Iowa State College's first Black student, welcoming him into their home at a time when segregation excluded Carver from campus life.⁷⁶ Young Wallace struck up a friendship with the botanist-in-training. The relationship deepened and would influence his views on race and ecology for the rest of his life.

During his time as Secretary of Agriculture, and later as Vice President of the United States, Wallace shaped key policies to mitigate the economic disruption of the Great Depression and the farming and environmental crisis of the Dust Bowl, including programs to stabilize crop prices, restore the soil, and keep family farms afloat.

Thanks to these policies, many families were able to hold onto their land. Sadly, due to segregation and racism, tribal nations and Black farmers, particularly in the South, were not granted access to the same government resources.⁷⁸ The legacy of this unequal treatment persists today. Black land ownership has dropped by 90 percent from 1910 to 1997, and Black producers, who operated about one-seventh of all farm operations in the United States in 1920, today make up less than two percent of all farmers.^{79,80,81}

This history, and the deep interest of Scott Fitzmorris, Henry A. Wallace's great grandson, and his wife Erica, led to a growing focus for WGF on agroecology. Further, its intersection with WGF's work on climate, women's rights, democracy, and corporate power, deeply informed WGF's commitment to agroecology

and the idea that the ability of plants and people to flourish depends on the health of the whole ecosystem: social, economic, political, and ecological.

Fighting Corporate Power: The Heart of Agroecology

The power of Big Ag has shaped policies that tilt the scales toward large-scale industrial farms. Subsidies and regulations overwhelmingly favor industrial-scale agriculture, fueling one of the most consolidated industries in the world where a small number of corporations exert outsized control over seeds, inputs, land, and distribution. This top-heavy concentration of power has come at a heavy cost to people, the environment, and democracy—nationally and globally.

And people have responded. Across the globe, movements for agroecology and food sovereignty are asserting the right of communities to democratically determine their own food systems and standing up to corporate efforts to privatize the seed, land, and water that those communities depend on to survive.

WGF has funded strategies to grow the capacity of the global agroecology and food sovereignty movements, supporting them to stand up to the corporate-dominated model of global food production, and pushing to shift power and resources toward democratic, regenerative, community-determined food systems.

The primary strategy in this regard aims to resource intersectional, multi-racial, working-class coalitions that are building democratic power to challenge corporate dominance over the food system. This includes global movements advancing land, seed, and agroecological sovereignty, as well as national coalitions fighting labor exploitation

and unequal participation. Both types of initiatives are united by a shared agenda linking food, labor, climate, gender, and racial justice.

Connected to WGF's Just Transition Africa work, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) has been a key partner organizing communities across Africa around the cross-cutting issues of agroecology, land and energy sovereignty, gender justice, and climate. Deeply connected to the grassroots, AFSA bridges local movements with high-level advocacy, shaping the future of food systems in Africa.

As WGF has accelerated its spend-out to meet the needs of movements responding to rising authoritarianism in the U.S., it has supported partners working at the intersection of democracy and food systems. One example is HEAL Food Alliance, a multi-sector and multi-racial coalition connecting and organizing BIPOC leaders across the food chain to fight for fair pay, safety and protection of workers, sustainable practices, and equitable economies.

Building Food Sovereignty as a Path to Community Power

Wallace Global Fund's agroecology work has fundamentally been about shifting power within the food system and allowing communities to realize their own visions of justice and economic sustainability. It has prioritized centering racial justice and Indigenous sovereignty, particularly to redress inequities in land and resource access that trace back to the New Deal era.

WGF has pursued these goals by investing in communities' own creative, innovative strategies for food sovereignty to strengthen their self-determination, resilience, and political agency.

Below are just a few examples of how these strategies have taken shape.

1. Follow the lead of communities and partner with them on realizing their visions for justice.

Standing Rock was just one example of how WGF followed partners' leads on their priorities for greater community agency over food, water, and energy to boost economic and political power. The Rural Beacon Initiative is another key partner working directly with communities in the U.S. Southeast to address the intersecting challenges of Black land loss, climate change, and systemic inequities. WGF was an early funder of their Sustainability Hub at Free Union Farm, a 52-acre hub for regenerative agriculture, clean energy, and conservation finance projects that sits on what was once a freedmen's community.⁸² The Sustainability Hub is a replicable model for other rural communities across the country, and it serves the surrounding community as an educational asset to build clean technology skills and workforce opportunities.

2. Build momentum toward an inter-local movement for agroecology by connecting organizations and leaders across sectors and geographies around a shared vision for food sovereignty rooted in agroecological principles.

For example, WGF has contributed to the Agroecology Fund, a pooled grantmaking fund through which a collaborative group of farmers, Indigenous and grassroots leaders, researchers, and advocates are advancing agroecology from the ground up. This ecosystem approach has helped knit together a powerful, global, and cross-sectoral movement that pairs farmers with researchers, policy advocates, and decision-makers to ensure frontline voices are represented in institutional spaces.

3. Impact investing for agroecology.

Disrupting corporate monopoly requires harnessing financial systems in new ways that shift power and resources to communities, particularly women, people of color, and Indigenous groups that have been systematically excluded from fair participation in these systems. WGF's early agroecology work has supported impact investing around frontline, women-led economic initiatives to build wealth, community power, and well-being.

Across all these approaches, WGF's agroecology work shifts agency and power over food systems back to communities. By partnering with them directly on projects that advance their visions for change, while also funding the organizing and movements challenging corporate monopoly power, WGF has helped create the conditions for alternatives to industrial farming to emerge.



CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In his warnings about the “dangers of American fascism,” Henry A. Wallace underscored the danger of unchecked corporate power.⁸³ He argued that by “using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously,” corporate interests could “keep the common man in eternal subjection” and “sacrifice democracy itself.”



Over the decades since Wallace’s initial warnings, the threat of unchecked corporate power and corruption has only intensified. Powerful monopolies spanning vital sectors such as tech, fossil fuels, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture wield outsized political influence and, in some cases, have captured regulators and other political institutions. The implications of this capture have been devastating to democracy, justice, public health and safety, and the environment, and they include growing assaults on the right to free speech and peaceful protest.

Faced with such unchecked power, innovative advocates and movements are finding creative ways to hold corporations accountable for their impacts on the environment, democracy, and human rights. Campaigns have targeted companies directly and have also pressured investors to make corporations abide by human rights and environmental standards while ensuring that financial institutions themselves are also held accountable.

The Wallace Global Fund has taken three steps to support these movements and advance corporate accountability. First, it has integrated accountability initiatives into all of WGF’s program areas. Second, it has directly addressed corporate accountability

with its own dedicated program area. Finally, we have embedded holding corporations to account into WGF’s investment practice and asset activism. The goal of this three-pronged approach is to build power at scale to disrupt corporate power. Ultimately, building a just and prosperous economy that works for all requires redefining the very purpose of the corporation and creating new economic models that prioritize social, economic, and environmental justice.

Corporate Accountability Strategies at Work

The Wallace Global Fund has advanced movement-led campaigns that leverage financial assets for social and environmental change, while exposing and transforming systems that entrench corporate abuses of power in an effort to end corporate corruption of political systems. Some of these priority campaigns have included:

Global Trade and Resources

WGF’s earliest work on corporate accountability focused on globalization and trade, including challenging the establishment of the World Trade Organization. WGF’s partners worked to combat Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms in global trade agreements

that enable transnational corporations to sue governments in secretive tribunals outside of their national legal systems. By backing partners such as the [Trade Justice Education Fund](#) and [Rethink Trade](#), WGF has worked to expand public awareness of the harms of corporate-rigged trade agreements while advancing alternatives that prioritize people and the planet. Through research, policy analysis, strategic communications, and movement convening, these partners helped strengthen the trade justice movement and challenged corporate efforts to use trade agreements to undermine consumer privacy, data security, AI accountability, workers’ rights, and antitrust protections.

Fighting Natural Resource Privatization

A number of WGF’s partners have tackled the increasing privatization of water and other vital natural resources. Partners like the [Blue Planet Project](#) provide communities with the tools to fight the privatization of water and promote the human right to water. Through its Blue Communities Project, the organization has worked with local governments, community activists, and public water operators to establish protections for the right to water and advance universal access to safe, clean drinking water. [Food & Water Watch](#) has complemented this work by organizing winning campaigns at the local, state, and federal levels to protect public water systems and other essential resources.

I am committed to using the power of our democracy to control rigorously and, wherever necessary, to remove from private to public hands, the power of huge corporate monopolies and international big business.⁸⁴

–Henry A. Wallace

Progressive Party Candidate
for President of the United States

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SPOTLIGHT:

EL SALVADOR MINING WORK

In 2010, Wallace Global Fund provided support to water defenders in El Salvador who were fighting to protect access to safe water that was under threat from mining. We came to this work as a result of our focus on international trade agreements and the ability of corporations to sue governments for access to resources. We funded Salvadoran organizations and groups across Central America calling for a moratorium on gold mining and the defense of the right to water, convened international strategy meetings, and supported research and advocacy by the Institute for Policy Studies. This work led to a national moratorium on mining in El Salvador that lasted until 2024, policies



protecting the right to water, and the defeat of two trade suits filed by U.S. and Canadian gold mining companies.^{85,86} Our partners amplified the case and its success, inspiring solidarity for other water battles the world over, and momentum from this further funneled WGF’s support of an offensive strategy on trade.



Taxing Billionaires

Recognizing the extreme wealth inequality undermining democracy and economic justice, WGF has supported partners working to advance policies that ensure that the wealthiest pay their fair share of taxes. For more than 60 years, the [Institute for Policy Studies \(IPS\)](#) has been at the forefront of efforts to challenge economic inequality, advance corporate accountability, and reform trade and economic systems—from tax breaks that benefit billionaires to runaway CEO pay. Their report, *Forging a Democracy that Works for All: Countering the Power of Billionaires, Corporations, and the Pentagon*, visualizes how this can be done: closing the loopholes that let the ultra-wealthy hide assets and avoid taxes, supporting grassroots campaigns to tax extreme wealth and channel that revenue into widely popular public priorities, and cutting off taxpayer subsidies and government contracts for corporations that harm workers and communities through environmental violations, poverty wages, and excessive CEO pay. It also

urges ending subsidies to fossil fuel corporations and getting corporate money out of politics, so that democratic decisions aren't shaped by the wealthiest corporations and individuals.

The Patriotic Millionaires

This network of wealthy Americans has emerged as a powerful and growing network to challenge the extreme concentration of wealth and power that is destabilizing democracy and deepening economic inequality.⁸⁷ Members advocate for a more progressive tax system, a living wage, and equal political representation for all citizens. As key partners in campaigns to advance taxes on billionaires and the ultra-wealthy, they have challenged the growing influence of oligarchs and corporate power. Recently, [Families Over Billionaires](#) has supported the national grassroots network opposing the tax giveaways to billionaires and corporations while advocating that federal and state taxes be deployed to support economic and social programs that benefit working families.⁸⁸

SPOTLIGHT:

PROTECTING PEACEFUL PROTEST

Wallace Global Fund has supported organizations and movements that peacefully defend their communities, land, and natural resources; challenge harmful extractive projects; and hold corporations accountable for human rights and environmental abuses. Many of our grantees have become targets of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) because of their work supporting peaceful protest, representing communities harmed by corporate activity, and defending the rights of activists.

Recognizing the growing threat these lawsuits posed to civil society, EarthRights International, Greenpeace, and the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR) partnered

with WGF and began organizing to confront the misuse of the legal system to silence public-interest advocacy. In October 2017, they convened a background briefing bringing together U.S.-based lawyers and environmental, development, and human rights organizations engaged in strategic litigation. This convening laid the foundation for the [Protect the Protest coalition](#) that formally launched as a task force the following September.⁸⁹ The task force's member organizations combined their legal expertise to coordinate strategy and build collective power to push back against SLAPP suits and defend the free speech rights of public interest advocates across the United States.





Elevating Human Rights Standards in the Rush for Transition Minerals: The Next Frontier in Corporate Accountability

A new global struggle is unfolding around the rush for transition minerals. Copper, cobalt, lithium, nickel, and other materials are essential to renewable energy, electrification, and tech devices. The race to control them has opened a major new frontier for corporate exploitation. Mining projects threaten to reproduce the worst patterns of the extractive economy: dispossession of Indigenous lands, pollution of water and ecosystems, dangerous working conditions, attacks on human rights advocates, and the exclusion of communities from decisions about their own futures.

In response, Indigenous peoples, workers, women, and frontline movements are organizing across borders demanding the right to shape—and benefit from—the green transition. Whether the energy transition reproduces another cycle of extraction or lays the foundation for a more just economy will be one of the defining human rights struggles of the coming decades.

WGF entered this struggle early and supported human rights standards before abusive practices became entrenched in the renewable-energy economy. In 2016, the fund made a seed grant to the [Business and Human Rights Resource Centre \(BHRRC\)](#) to investigate renewable-energy companies and advance standards on free, prior, and informed consent and on labor rights and equitable benefit sharing. As the mineral rush accelerated, WGF has helped BHRRC launch its [Transition Minerals Tracker](#), turning dispersed reports of harm into global evidence for communities, advocates and investors.⁹⁰ BHRRC also successfully integrated testimony from workers and human-rights defenders in the Global South into its advocacy for the [EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#). Adopted in 2024, this directive moved human rights and environmental due diligence from a voluntary expectation toward a binding corporate duty.⁹¹

Prioritizing Asset Activism

Corporations implicated in human rights violations depend fundamentally on investors and financial institutions for capital and legitimacy. That dependence creates leverage: The financial relationships sustaining corporate power can also be mobilized to challenge it. Through its asset activism, WGF has followed the money and used its investing leverage to hold companies

accountable. By combining research with shareholder engagement, resolutions, proxy voting, and coordinated investor action, the WGF's partners have pressed for concrete changes in corporate policy and practice.

WGF has long partnered with [As You Sow](#), which puts shareholder power behind human rights. Its Racial Justice and Workplace Equity Scorecards expose where companies are falling short and give investors evidence to demand change.⁹² As You Sow brings those findings into negotiations with management and turns to shareholder resolutions when necessary.

To amplify the power of investment activism and take it further than company-by-company action, WGF helped seed the [Investor Alliance for Human Rights](#) in 2018 as an initiative of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#). The alliance brought investors together across companies and sectors to share research, align demands, and coordinate campaigns. Acting collectively strengthened their influence over corporate boards and allowed them to carry a common voice into public policy and standard-setting. The alliance has since grown to more than 250 investors representing over \$20 trillion in assets across 21 countries, transforming dispersed investors into an organized force capable of influencing companies, industries, and policymakers.⁹³

JUSTICE MOVEMENTS AND CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

GENDER JUSTICE

Wallace Global Fund has long prioritized work at the intersection of women’s rights, gender-based violence, and tech platform accountability. Online abuse of women continues to intensify, with major tech platforms operating with almost complete impunity. Digital attacks on women politicians, journalists, and activists are designed to discredit, devalue, and delegitimize them with the goal of rolling back women’s rights and weakening democratic institutions. The proliferation of AI is making the situation worse: It is estimated that 90 percent of all deepfakes online are sexual, and 90 percent of those sexual deepfakes are of women and girls.⁹⁴ AI-enabled sexual violence is epidemic, and tech platforms are profiting from it.

WGF supported [UltraViolet](#)’s corporate accountability work focused on preventing the spread of racist and sexist disinformation targeting women. Their media accountability campaigns focused on de-platforming perpetrators of racist and sexist disinformation and holding platforms such as Facebook and X accountable for spreading racist and sexist disinformation.⁹⁵ UltraViolet has also prioritized defending DEI in the digital age, and its “Reclaim the Domain” work confronts AI-enabled sexual exploitation and harm.

WGF also supported [#ShePersisted](#), which has emerged as a key leader in tackling gendered disinformation, a tool increasingly utilized by authoritarian leaders and anti-rights activists to weaken women’s rights and degrade democracy worldwide. #ShePersisted has worked to expose and confront gendered disinformation regionally and globally. For example, they advocated for gender-based protections such as a mandatory risk assessment for “the right to gender equality” within the 2022 European Union Digital Services Act.⁹⁶



RACIAL JUSTICE

Hundreds of years of discriminatory policies have created a massive racial wealth gap in the United States. WGF’s partners in advancing racial justice and corporate accountability have fought against racism, wage inequity, and the exploitative practices of big business. Black Lives Matter was a powerful catalyst for American politics at the intersection of corporate accountability, criminal justice, and economic policy. WGF’s partners have demanded that businesses commit to economic equality and civil rights, conduct racial justice audits of their operations, and commit resources for racial justice initiatives. Recent years have seen a major backlash, and corporations have come under mounting political pressure to retract their civil rights and DEI commitments.

[Color Of Change](#), the nation’s largest online racial justice organization, campaigns to hold corporations accountable. It works by targeting tech companies on digital safety, fighting media bias, and tracking whether companies fulfill their DEI commitments. Their Black Tech Agenda offers an “affirmative vision to protect and advance civil rights.”⁹⁷ Color Of Change has also prioritized combating mis- and disinformation and worked to create a safe environment online for Black people and strengthen Black civic engagement and voter participation.

The Action Center on Race and the Economy (ACRE) leads campaigns that directly confront the [financial and political profiteers](#) who benefit from racialized economic crises. ACRE fights for “moral budgets”—budgets that invest in Black and brown communities to repair harm with “fully-funded, equitably distributed, publicly-owned, and locally-controlled services, paid for by mega-corporations, Wall Street, and the wealthy.”⁹⁸ These budgets ensure that communities’ interests are put ahead of corporate interests in city and state budget and policy processes.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE: LABOR RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

Across the United States, corporate power shapes what workers earn, the conditions they face, and their ability to organize. The federal minimum wage has been \$7.25/hour since 2009, and many employers are permitted to pay workers even less.⁹⁹ WGF has supported worker-led campaigns that confront this power in the workplace and through public policy. These campaigns build worker power and turn demands for better wages and conditions into a wider movement for economic justice.

[Athena Coalition](#). The Athena Coalition is a national, multi-issue coalition working to confront the growing concentration of corporate power, with a primary focus on Amazon. The coalition brings together workers, small business owners, and activists to challenge Amazon’s influence across its workplaces and communities. Its members organize at the local, national, and international levels to defend workers’ rights, protect environmental health, strengthen community self-determination, safeguard democracy, and support independent businesses. Their campaigns also advance policy priorities that reinforce union organizing efforts, including stronger whistleblower protections, limits on workplace surveillance, and bans on facial recognition technology at the local, state, and federal levels.

Living Wage For All. [One Fair Wage](#) and Popular Democracy launched the Living Wage For All campaign to build a national movement for wages that reflect the real cost of living. One Fair Wage brings deep organizing experience among service and tipped workers, while Popular Democracy connects the campaign to grassroots organizations across the country. Together, they are carrying local wage struggles into state and federal policy. The campaign unites more than 100 organizations behind a shared demand: a minimum wage that meets the cost of living for every worker, no exceptions.¹⁰⁰

Across the world, corporate power is tightening its grip on democracy. A handful of tech billionaires now control the platforms on which public debate takes place, reaping vast profits from business models that amplify disinformation and abuse. Transnational corporations leverage trade agreements to challenge democratic decisions, while mining companies compete for control of land, water, and transition minerals, leaving communities across the Global South to bear the costs. In the United States, corporate money has reached so deeply into government that it threatens democracy itself. Again and again, the pattern repeats: When corporate power goes unchecked, profit prevails over people and the planet.

But corporations are not immovable. From water defenders in El Salvador defeating mining companies to workers confronting Amazon, and racial- and gender-justice movements challenging tech platforms, WGF's partners have shown time and again that collective action can break even the strongest corporate grip.

Unprecedented corporate influence over government threatens every field that foundations purport to advance—from democracy and human rights to the environment, public health, and more. Philanthropy must now be ready to confront corporate power head-on. This starts by using a corporate lens to evaluate existing grantmaking strategies and then funding movements to break corporate capture and mobilize foundation investments as a source of pressure for change.



JUST, MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

Throughout his long career in public life, Henry A. Wallace articulated a robust, progressive vision of American democracy. He warned against the capture of American political institutions by economic elites who were happy to put power and profit over the people's needs.¹⁰¹ He ceaselessly advocated for everyday Americans and was ahead of his time in advocating for gender and racial equality—to the point of risking his life while campaigning against Jim Crow and segregation in the American South.¹⁰²



“

I am committed to the policy of placing human rights above property rights. I am committed to using the power of our democracy to control rigorously and, wherever necessary, to remove from private to public hands, the power of huge corporate monopolies and international big business... I am committed and do renounce the support of those who practice hate and preach prejudice; of those who would limit the civil rights of others; of those who would restrict the use of the Ballot.¹⁰³

—Henry A. Wallace

Progressive Party Candidate
for President of the United States

Henry A. Wallace's Prophetic Vision

Perhaps most importantly, Wallace understood that democracy was more than formal political rights. If it were to guarantee the dignity of all people, a democratic society like the United States had to meet its people's basic needs for jobs, health and safety, and a thriving natural world. He warned that a democracy that failed to provide for the welfare of all would ultimately fail. It was this connection between political rights and economic and social justice that defined his advocacy for labor unions, national health insurance, public works and jobs, and the sweeping vision and groundbreaking policies of the New Deal.

Besides a compelling political analysis, Wallace offers something else: a prophetic vision. In his voluminous speeches, letters, and writings, he anticipated today's democratic crisis in the United States.

Wallace was speaking in 1948, but he could very well be talking about today—when monopoly interests do not simply influence our government, but have captured it.

Henry A. Wallace argued that democracy's success requires civil society to consistently and rigorously hold those in power accountable to the conscience and the rights of the people. He warned that secrecy, propaganda, and manipulation were the tools of fascists and that true democracy required open debate, a vibrant and free media, and an informed public. He called on citizens to demand truth and transparency and insist on freedoms of the press and public debate as essential bulwarks against government secrecy and to ensure a well-informed electorate. He also urged his fellow Americans to organize and participate in civic and political groups and to exercise vigorous oversight of government and corporate actors. Never has this vision of an active citizenry and robust civil society been more relevant than in this moment of American history.



A new movement to defend and expand democracy is forming. In communities across the country, everyday people are coming together with a twofold mission: They are actively **resisting** the authoritarian breakthrough by standing up to assaults on communities and the targeting of immigrants, defending voting rights and threats to elections, protecting free speech and peaceful protest, and holding institutions and corporations accountable for colluding with authoritarian interests. And as they offer this resistance, they are also **rising** to define a new model of a just, prosperous, multiracial democracy that puts the dignity of all over the profit of a few.

This growing pro-democracy movement draws from the deep well of activism and community organizing—historically led by communities of color—that defines America's progressive tradition.

It is a tradition that includes anti-slavery activism, the struggle for civil rights, the women's movement, the fight for economic justice and workers' rights, the battle against the climate crisis, and so much other work by ordinary people willing to sacrifice everything for a more just and democratic future. Henry A. Wallace would be heartened by today's people-powered movement. It has the power to counter the general public's widespread loss of faith in politics and government institutions and spur Americans to increase their political engagement. Wallace would see in this resolute resistance to authoritarianism and inspiring articulation of multiracial democracy the opportunity to create the next New Deal, one that confronts the climate threat, centers racial and gender justice, and demands an economy of shared prosperity for all people.

Our Support for the Growing Democracy Movement

A vibrant democracy requires constant vigilance and participation, ensuring that it is protected and expanded if it is to be durable against subversion by special interests. It must also adapt and grow in its capacity to deliver tangible benefits to the majority it represents. A resilient democracy is essential for addressing modern-day challenges to the basic needs of families, workers, and communities.

For this reason, the defense of democracy is a strategic focus that runs through every one of WGF's programmatic and issue initiatives. It is its own dedicated program area and one of WGF's largest. While WGF's democracy work in other program areas supports pro-democratic movements across the globe, our specific democracy program area is focused on addressing the threats in the United States.

Consistent with Henry A. Wallace's progressive vision of democracy, we believe that the greatest threat to U.S. democracy today is the capture of government by special interests. Money in our political system is a special form of legalized corruption that is unique to the United States. Thanks to the overwhelming influence of industries and interests like big tech, fossil fuel corporations, big pharma, and the firearms industry, our children's health and the lives and interests of working families are under assault.

WGF has two overarching priorities in advancing U.S. democracy. The first is fighting the corporate, billionaire, and monopoly interests controlling our system. The second aims to support the organizing strategies and movement infrastructure required to counter corporate interests, to defend racial, economic, and gender justice, democratic systems and practices, and to build a multiracial, just democracy that puts people over profit.

WGF's U.S. democracy work has advanced across a gamut of interconnected strategies and has evolved to meet the goals and strategies of our partners. In addition to what is described below, we have supported a progressive analysis of the courts in defense of the Constitution and the rights it upholds, provided dedicated support for independent media, and invested in the power of transformative ideas to move them to the center of public debate. Grantees have received long-term durable funding and rapid response grants as threats to their communities emerged, or scaled funding to meet opportunities in specific moments.

Today, many of our long-standing and new partners are active in defending our democracy against authoritarian impulses and threats. Others are charting the pathway to achieve a true multiracial democracy with bold interventions to meet the economic rights and dignity of all people. Many are doing both.

Democracy Strategies and Partners

It is impossible to showcase all of the work supported, partnerships built, and movements advanced. What follows is a necessarily incomplete snapshot into the pro-democracy work we support. These highlights capture only a fraction of the energy and ideas groups are bringing to building the multiracial democracy of America's future.

Youth Voter Engagement

Consistent with the emphasis WGF places on developing the leaders of tomorrow, a special focus of our democracy work is youth civic participation and support for youth-led advocacy and movement building.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH ORGANIZING

The Alliance for Youth Organizing (AYO) is an important nonpartisan anchor of the youth civic ecosystem, supporting and coordinating youth-led organizations across the country working to build a unified movement for a strong multiracial democracy. More than a grantmaker, they are a strategic hub that cultivates political education, fosters shared strategy across states, and equips young people to exercise real governing power.

A core part of AYO's work focuses on preparing young people to advance economic justice and democracy-protecting solutions. The goal is to develop and deploy practical strategies that safeguard voting rights, expand political participation, counter disinformation, and push back against authoritarian governance trends. AYO is actively building a youth coalition capable of articulating how these political forces affect young people's daily lives, from economic insecurity to representation.

AYO's approach operates through the lens of broader movement-building, connecting grantees into shared strategies, narrative frames, and nonpartisan campaign opportunities rather than functioning as stand-alone project support. Across its work, AYO is building up young people as an organized, decisive constituency that will shape the country's political future.





Building Multi-Issue Coalitions to Defend Democracy

WGF has prioritized defending democratic norms, institutions, and elections through civic engagement and election protection; supported issue and constituency-based organizing to build a broad-based progressive movement; and invested deeply in grassroots organizing structures and national networks.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

THE DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

The Democracy Initiative (DI) was founded in 2013 by the NAACP, Communication Workers of America, the Sierra Club, and Greenpeace with seed support from WGF.¹⁰⁴ Its mission was to engage large, national issue-based membership organizations to bring their members into activism on critical democracy issues, including voting rights and the negative influence of money in politics. The DI founders knew that connecting and facilitating dialogue among unions, civil rights, and environmental organizations was critical and that all of their issue-specific work would be more successful if American democracy was more fair and functional.¹⁰⁵ By design, it prioritized outreach to groups for whom democracy was not their main issue, and in doing so, brought scores of new people into democracy work.

By 2019, DI had 65 partner organizations representing more than 45 million members from labor, civil rights, environmental, faith, women's rights, and LGBT communities. It created a Democracy 365 platform of priority reforms, offered election protection training, and rallied its members to fight for equitable and safe voting access—especially against the increasing suppression-based legislation directed at communities of color.

While the Democracy Initiative closed its doors over five years ago, the benefits of its intersectional approach to coalition work are felt today. DI provided a critically needed forum where leaders, some of whom had been on opposite sides of issues in the past, could sit at the same table, hash out their differences, and unite around shared pro-democracy goals. The increased understanding, respect, and collaboration forged through collective campaigning created relationships that have made our democracy movement stronger.

All the People, All the Places: Building the Rural Democracy Movement

National democracy NGOs and funders have long neglected rural places, failing to address the specific challenges and universal needs of rural communities and states that lead to greater economic inequality, including decrepit infrastructure, inadequate and unaffordable health care, poor education systems, and job erosion.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

HEARTLAND FUND

In 2017, WGF prioritized building a rural democracy initiative to address this deep and systemic deficit in progressive rural organizing. We commissioned Ben Goldfarb's *All the People All the Places*, a benchmark research and strategy document that outlines recommendations for donors who want to address generations of disinvestment in rural communities through grassroots organizing and civic engagement.¹⁰⁶ Together with the publication of the report, WGF helped catalyze the Heartland Fund, a then-new grantmaking vehicle focused on resourcing progressive, multiracial organizing in rural areas and connecting it to broader allies and movements at the regional and national levels.

As a longtime climate funder, WGF consistently worked in partnership with the Heartland Fund to close the gap between rural democracy work and climate philanthropy, recognizing the outsized impacts of climate change on rural populations, particularly Black and Indigenous communities, as well as the huge opportunity renewable energy



holds for these regions. In 2021, WGF was instrumental in launching the **Rural Climate Partnership** (RCP), the first collaborative fund focused exclusively on promoting inclusive, scalable climate solutions benefiting rural communities.

By filling a long-neglected gap in funding for progressive organizing around democracy and climate in rural America, both initiatives have grown rapidly since their founding. The Heartland Fund now includes 47 foundation partners and dozens of allied donors, and the Rural Democracy Initiative has grown from a nascent effort into a network of more than 75 grantee partners.¹⁰⁷ The work of Heartland Fund and the **Rural Climate Initiative** to connect organizers and public-interest groups has ultimately fostered a more nuanced understanding of the issues affecting rural communities and built intersectional power across rural regions.

Ensuring Equal Voting Rights

True democracy cannot tolerate inequitable treatment under the law, violation of basic human rights, or discrimination or restriction of access on the basis of race, gender, faith, or place of birth. As such, WGF has supported work to promote racial and criminal justice reform, advocated for equity in the criminal justice system and against the death penalty, and defended the rights of immigrants. Further, we have long prioritized fighting disproportionate attacks on the voting rights of people of color.

Our politics will not save us. Our humanity will. Real change comes from the hearts, the minds, and imaginations of people when we believe in justice. Here we are, a nation that has forced billions into artificial intelligence, but will not invest in the greatest creation ever made—the human mind, the human soul, human beings.¹¹¹ ”

— LaTosha Brown
Black Voters Matter

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

BLACK VOTERS MATTER

Black Voters Matter is a powerful organizing force whose mission is to increase civic engagement and build power in Black communities. The organization does this by addressing the issues that matter most to Black voters, especially those involving economic, racial, and climate justice. BVM has acted as a critical leader in the fight against voter suppression and race-based political attacks, a focus that has expanded significantly in the past years. Their nonpartisan work to get out the vote has produced strong results, including turnout rates of 87% among the 18- to 24-year-olds BVM engaged on HBCU campuses in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, and 82% on Georgia campuses.¹⁰⁸ BVM’s role as a neutral and nonpartisan infrastructure builder creates the conditions for collaboration rather than competition across the field.

Most recently, BVM has been playing a crucial role in building power across affected communities in the face of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Louisiana v. Callais decision that eviscerated the Voting Rights Act and of the ongoing and aggressive gerrymandering targeting Black voters, particularly in the South.¹⁰⁹ In May, the organization brought faith and civic leaders from across the country together for a National Day of Action in Alabama, more than sixty years after civil rights organizers marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge demanding the freedom to vote.¹¹⁰

Defending Core Constitutional Rights

As authoritarian forces gathered strength in 2025, WGF provided rapid and deep support for those seeking to resist its consolidation. This included support for groups organizing the public to take action and new media strategies to reach them, anti-authoritarian education and training for activist and organizing groups, strategic litigation against the dismantling of democratic institutions, and defense of the right to peaceful protest and other rights enshrined in the Constitution.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE FIRST AMENDMENT

The Committee for the First Amendment is a large collective of artists, storytellers, and cultural leaders standing together to defend free expression against government repression, industry complicity, and intimidation. The committee is organizing the entertainment industry to fight assaults on the First Amendment and to be a pillar of democracy. With a statement from Jane Fonda and more than 500 other industry partners, the committee launched on October 1, 2025.¹¹² The statement was a declaration of the signees’ shared desire to act in the face of encroaching authoritarianism and served as a signal to the world that members of the industry were ready to mobilize in the face of attacks on their freedoms and their colleagues. The committee draws inspiration from the original Committee for the First Amendment, when artists like Lucille Ball, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, and Jane’s father, Henry Fonda, stood up to government attacks during the darkness of the McCarthy era.

In March 2026, the committee held **Artists United for Our Freedoms outside the Kennedy Center** to call attention to attacks on this great institution and encourage people to join that month’s No Kings rallies. In June, the committee organized a nationally livestreamed show with **Rise Up, Sing Out, A Celebration of the First Amendment** with 2,000 house parties and tens of thousands signing up to take action to protect the 2026 Elections.^{113,114}

Economic Equality

Families, workers, and communities across the country are calling on governments to address vital economic issues, counter recent assaults on the basic social safety net, and stop giveaways to billionaires and industry. They are demanding ambitious and transformative policies and programs that confront the interlocking economic challenges that workers and families must confront: steep economic inequality, the affordability crisis, wage stagnation, and widespread job losses, plus the spiraling costs of healthcare, childcare, and eldercare. Across the country, WGF partners are advancing innovative and transformative economic solutions.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

The Poor People's Campaign is a "moral-fusion" movement mobilizing poor and low-wealth communities across the United States around an agenda that advances their needs and priorities. It is led by Bishop William Barber and Rev. Liz Theoharis and rooted in the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who called for a "revolution of values" in America through the formation of a movement to unite poor and under-resourced communities.¹¹⁵ Today, the campaign continues this legacy, bringing people together across backgrounds to confront interlocking issues of racism, climate change, systemic poverty, and inequality. It aims to build a future where everyone has the means to lead a joyful, dignified life.

In 2020, Wallace Global Fund presented the Poor People's Campaign with the third Henry Wallace Award to recognize the movement's vital work uniting people from all corners of the United States for transformative government interventions, restraint of corporate power, and righting the wrongs of a society that puts profits over the interests of people and the planet. Working with political leaders, clergy, unions, and movement partners, they are confronting modern authoritarian forces and growing the power of poor and low-wage workers to build an American democracy that is truly multiracial and centered on the needs of working-class people.

Conclusion

As we have emphasized throughout this report, we stand at an inflection point in our collective history. Now is the time to take back our democracy and chart the path toward a just and prosperous future for all people. Just as the New Deal rose like a phoenix out of the ashes of the Great Depression, we believe that today's progressive movements have the power to bring a new and positive vision to life based on a democratic compact that unites us across race, class, and geography and around the concerns and needs of the common people. With the resources and other powerful tools at the disposal of philanthropy, these movements will be a huge step closer to succeeding.

The stones that the builder rejected are now the cornerstones of this experiment called America. When the rejected get together, we can in fact redeem America from hate and discrimination. When the rejected join hands, our togetherness becomes the instrument of redemption, and we can revive and ensure that the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and equal protection under the law, and care for the common good will never be taken away or forfeited for anybody, anytime, anywhere. 

—Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II



WGF STATEMENT
IN SUPPORT OF
THE U.S. PRO-DEMOCRACY
MOVEMENT

As the United States commemorates the 250th anniversary of its founding, we are witnessing unprecedented threats to our imperfect but invaluable democracy. The promise of a political system claiming to ensure rights and justice for all has yet to be fully realized. Democracy requires constant vigilance and defense against those forces that seek to subvert it for political and economic power.

Built upon a long and deep history of organizing and advocacy, a growing, diverse pro-democracy movement is simultaneously resisting assaults on democratic norms, practices, and institutions and advancing a transformative vision for a government that works for the majority. Our country urgently needs lasting solutions to historic levels of economic inequality, systemic and pervasive racism, the spread of mis- and disinformation, and the rapidly accelerating climate catastrophe. United, we can build a just and prosperous economy for all and a government that places people over the economic interests that are increasingly capturing our government.

In response to the unprecedented moment in our country’s history, Wallace Global Fund accelerated a planned spend-out to support the fast-growing, nonpartisan movement for a just, sustainable, multiracial democracy and moved \$24 million in our final 15 months of grantmaking to support it.

Philanthropy needs to be courageous. It must respond at scale and in a manner commensurate with both the threats and the opportunities at this historic inflection point. It is imperative that we work in deep partnership with movements and organizing groups and be responsive to their needs and strategies. Democracy serves the mission of all philanthropic donors, no matter the issues or sectors they invest in. As such, foundations should support the nonpartisan and peaceful resistance to undemocratic forces as well as the rise of a popular democratic movement that demands a government that delivers benefits for all, puts people over profit, and stands up to corporate capture of our political system. This is not the moment for business as usual. Donors should prioritize supporting popular movements and organizations that are resisting and rising for the common good.



SPEND-OUT AND AN INVITATION

As Wallace Global Fund's story draws to a close, we leave behind two legacy initiatives—and issue a request to a philanthropic sector at a crossroads.



We may never live through another moment quite like we are facing now.

It may sound clichéd at this point, but it is evident that we are navigating uniquely dark times. In the United States, our democratic norms, institutions, and practices are under siege by authoritarian forces, with multiple [ratings](#) of the health of American democracy indicating a regression. The very upper tier of the economy is swelling with riches and skewing our politics, while social services are decimated and the cost of living soars far beyond wage growth.

Globally, we are witnessing a similar decline,¹¹⁶ with only 6.6% of the world's population living in states defined as full democracies¹¹⁷ and 74% now living in autocracies.¹¹⁸ In 2024, for the first time in over 20 years, there were fewer global democracies than autocracies.¹¹⁹ The accumulation of wealth,¹²⁰ corporate capture of government,¹²¹ and monopoly power have made inequality the defining characteristic of the global economy¹²² far beyond Henry A. Wallace's early warnings. As both a symptom of our unjust systems and a threat multiplier that makes them all worse, the accelerating climate crisis continues to make our planet a less healthy and more dangerous place.

At the same time, history tells us that times of great crisis open new paths to better things. The groundswell of progressive activism and leadership rising up in this country in response to our current decline is demanding not a mere return to where we were 20 years ago, but progress to a world that is many times better. In this moment of peril, we have an opportunity to deliver on the promise of a just, multiracial democracy that works for all—a vision that America has yet to achieve. Globally, we have

an opportunity to foster a resurgence in democratic governance and reshape the economy in a way that restores harmony with the planet, regenerating our land and our communities.

All of this means that we now find ourselves facing a choice: Given our access to resources and power, how should we behave at a time of such great turmoil and possibility?

This is the very question that Wallace Global Fund has been wrestling with: How do we mount a commensurate response to a reality that we have not experienced before? That is how we arrived at our decision to go all in and spend-out our assets in support of power-building and frontline movements for justice, democracy, and a thriving planet.

We started our initial discussions on the topic in 2017 and began formally planning our spend-out the following year. That included making final multi-year grants to our longtime partners, helping them to prepare for our closure, and connecting them to other sources of funding. In some cases, we helped set up new collaborative regranteeing funds that would enable partners to attract durable sources of funding to replace ours. We also began the work of establishing signature initiatives to carry on critical work and commemorate the life and legacy of Henry A. Wallace after Wallace Global Fund was closed.

When the spend-out process began, we were already paying out substantially more than 5 percent of our assets. In 2020, we bumped that payout up to 20 percent, and we decided to accelerate our spend out again in 2025. In the past year, we have moved tens of millions of dollars, in large part toward the pro-democracy movement that is serving as a beacon of hope in challenging times.

The approach that we have taken will not be for everyone, and, to be clear, our decision is not based on a universal allegiance to spending down, although

we do believe the sector's fixation on perpetuity is harmful overall. We know that some foundations will likely exist indefinitely, but donors of all types and sizes should be interrogating how they will meet this moment.

The good news is that we have, indeed, seen peers take encouraging steps in recent years, including the Unite in Advance solidarity campaign formed to defend foundations themselves from governmental attacks by the Trump administration.¹²⁶ Some funders have independently increased their payout rates above the standard 5 percent minimum.¹²⁷ The Level Up campaign, which asks funders to increase their annual grantmaking by 20 percent or more or to deliver a payout rate of 8 percent or higher from their endowments, and to move money quickly and more equitably, has garnered over 50 signatories.¹²⁸

But on balance, payout remains uninspired. According to a 2026 report by the Institute for Policy Studies, "Median payout at major grantmaking institutions—the 144 private foundations with endowments over \$1 billion—was 5.1 percent [in 2024].¹²⁹ The legal requirement is to hit 5 percent, showing that the nation's largest institutional funders are treating that as a ceiling instead of a floor."

Meanwhile, our institutions are amassing great wealth in this top-heavy economy: assets are surging while ordinary Americans are forced to choose between dinner and health care. IPS points to foundation market returns averaging 7.2 percent over the past five years and hitting 12 percent in 2024.¹³⁰ Setting aside the debate over spending out versus existing in perpetuity, how can the sector as a whole possibly justify its bulging investment accounts in the face of such tremendous need?

Beyond spending, security concerns and government scrutiny have made some funders more cautious about the information they share and the rhetoric they use—to avoid drawing pressure or appearing adversarial.¹³¹ Some donors have pulled funding unceremoniously or told grantees to stand down from some of their stances.^{132,133} Instead of keeping our heads down, we are now standing up in the urgent struggle for democratic rights and justice.

In spite of our critiques, we have also seen bold action: the rise of fearless collaborative funds, participatory decision-making models, inclusion of frontline leaders in foundation governance, an embrace of mission-aligned investing, and many other efforts to get money to the ground and be more accountable to the frontlines. Norms can be hard to change. But we can do it.

AN INVITATION TO GO ALL IN

As Wallace Global Fund draws to a close, we want to extend an invitation to our peers in philanthropy—we ask you to join us in pursuing a commensurate response to this pivotal moment. These responses will look different for each of us, but we believe they require a certain set of commitments and practices.

1. Have the Courage to Stand Up for Your Values

Resist the powerful urge to steer clear of conflict and disruption. Recognize authoritarianism for what it is, and name it as such. Ask yourself what your partners on the frontlines would say and do, and match their bravery with your own words and actions.

2. Support Movements to Shift Power

Pour resources into the organizing, infrastructure, and capacity of those on the frontlines working for a just world. They are the people who have always advanced human rights and protected democracy, so fund them appropriately. Invest deeply in the resistance to threats and in the advocacy for profound and transformative agendas that call on governments to put people over profit. Support young leaders. Scale what works.

3. Use All of the Tools Within Your Reach

Use your voice, your organizational practices, and your power as a convener and donor organizer to create change far beyond the reach of your own grantmaking. Align your investments with your programs, and use mission investing to advance your priorities.

4. Pay Out at Least 10%—and up to 100%—of Your Assets

Give until it hurts, whatever that looks like for you as an individual donor or as an institution. Given surging returns, surging needs, and fertile ground for transformative change, 10 percent should be the bare minimum for any funder that is serious about the struggle we are in. Though that payout rate does not threaten a foundation's perpetuity, we should all reconsider the assumed mandate that our institutions need to endure. Consider giving it all. It's what the moment demands of us.

SEEDING THE FUTURE: WGF LEGACY INITIATIVES

As Wallace Global Fund completes its spend-out, we leave behind two significant legacy initiatives that honor our founder, embody the values of his family, and build the leadership and fabric of progressive movements.

Her Horizon Fund

Her Horizon Fund is a new fund and movement support hub designed to drive resources at scale directly to frontline- and survivor-led organizations working to end female genital mutilation/cutting. Housed at Women Win, the fund launched in September 2026 with a \$14 million catalytic investment from Wallace Global Fund. Her Horizon Fund's goal is to pool \$100 million from bilateral, philanthropic, and corporate donors and reach a "tipping point" toward ending FGM/C in a generation.

Her Horizon Fund is among the largest known philanthropic commitments backing the frontline organizations working to end FGM/C. The fund also strengthens intermediary organizations supporting work at the frontlines, with an emphasis on advocacy and communications, resource mobilization, digital and physical security, monitoring and evaluation, and survivor care and well-being.

The design and approach of this new fund were based on a comprehensive, multi-year field assessment and consultations with survivors and key stakeholders in the FGM/C ecosystem. Survivors and activists will continue to shape the fund's strategic direction and grantmaking decisions. The fund will sustain the enduring commitment of Gordie Wallace, supported by her children and grandchildren, to free young girls from being cut and help create a world in which women can flourish.

To learn more, please visit <https://www.herhorizonfund.org>.

The Henry A. Wallace Initiative at the Institute for Policy Studies

In 2018, WGF established the Henry A. Wallace Award to recognize the extraordinary courage of movements that stand up to injustice, government oppression, and the abuse of power by corporations. There have been three recipients of the award: the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Sunrise Movement, and the Poor People's Campaign. Each award provided a significant gift, matched with additional grants or aligned investments to advance the awardee's work.

As WGF planned its spend-out, it was clear that we wanted to move beyond periodic awards to develop a lasting initiative to honor the legacy and values of our founder. To do this, we turned to a long-standing partner, the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), the nation's oldest multi-issue progressive research organization, which for over sixty years has collaborated with the most significant social change, peace, and justice movements.

In 2026, WGF provided a \$10 million endowment to IPS to launch the Henry A. Wallace Initiative and support key activities of the organization. Consistent with WGF's historic commitment to youth leadership, the centerpiece of the Initiative is the Henry A. Wallace Fellowship Program, which supports young leaders collaborating each summer with the IPS team. The Fellowship Program is designed to train and prepare these emerging leaders, while building a vibrant intergenerational cohort advancing new progressive ideas and building movements for social change. Further, the endowment will enable IPS to conduct annual programming on movement strategy and policy development, complemented by public engagement on topical issues central to the progressive agenda.

To learn more, please visit <https://ips-dc.org/project/henry-a-wallace-fellowship-program/> and <https://www.henrywallace.org>.

GRATITUDE

We could not name all of our grantees in this report, not even a fraction of them. This report was designed to showcase highlights of the work of many of our partners, to inspire investment in bold and transformative agendas, and to put our approach forward as an example to stir debate and action. It is not meant as self-congratulation. We did not always get it right, and this is not all about us.

It's about organizers and movements, and it always has been.

We would be remiss if we didn't close out this document with a few words of deep gratitude to our partners, who welcomed us to stand in solidarity with them. We are so grateful to you for passing on your wisdom to us. You gave us hope for a better future, and showed us that it is

indeed possible to change the world. You gave us the courage we needed to make difficult decisions and to become an activist institution in our own right. You changed us as an organization, and you changed us as individuals.

If Henry A. Wallace gave us the moral compass that has guided our actions all of these years, it was the people we supported and

partnered with who gave us the map to find our way. It has truly been an honor to be even a small part of the history you are all writing—and will continue to write long after we have closed our doors.

THANK YOU.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to our grantees, we would like to acknowledge our allied funding partners and funder affinity groups, with whom we have worked closely for decades and who carry this activist movement-building forward.

Deep thanks as well to the many partners who supported WGF’s work in myriad ways—including our talented current and former staff, and the allies who stood with us and our movement partners at news conferences, in videos, on social media, and beyond.

Thank you to our accounting, tax, and human resources teams at CBIZ, and to all the consultants and teams we have engaged throughout the years. Special thanks for this spend-out project go to May Sifuentes, Tate Williams, Britta Anstine, Ana Yamel Rodríguez Cuervo, Andreas Engelund, John Brady, Jennifer Goode Stevens, SPINX Digital, and the entire WGF staff. Thank you, as well, to the workers who facilitated our operations, served meals, worked our events, and supported our convenings.

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