



The Sus10 Principles for Trust-Based Funding

Who Funds Feminist Technology?

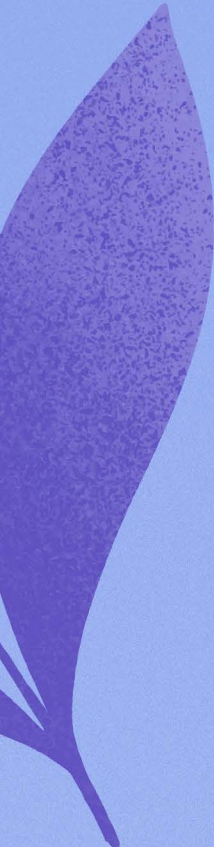
Neema Iyer, Varaidzo F. Magodo-Matimba and Mwikali Muoka



POLLCY

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acknowledgements

This paper would not exist without the generosity, courage, and commitment of many people and organisations.

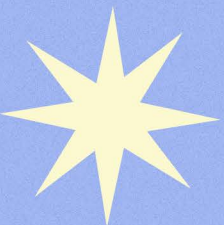
We are deeply grateful to our funders, many of whom have already embraced the trust-based, flexible funding practices this paper advocates for. Your belief in Pollicy's work, and your willingness to resource it on our terms, is itself a demonstration that another way of funding is possible.

We thank AWID and the forty-five participants who joined us in the room at AWID24. Your energy, honesty, and collective imagination shaped the Sus10 Principles from the ground up. This framework belongs to you as much as it does to us.

We thank GIZ and the participants at our Femtech Agency and Ownership project kickoff in Kampala, whose grounded, rigorous engagement with the feminist technology landscape gave this paper its evidence and its spine.

We are grateful to Mwikali Muoka, Pollicy's 2025-26 Grants and Growth Fellow, who created the podcast series accompanying this paper. Her work brings these principles to life in ways that a written document alone cannot.

Finally, we thank the entire Pollicy team who contributed to the thinking, the drafting, the debating, and the doing that this paper represents. Feminist technology is built collectively, and so is the work of sustaining it.



Glossary

Algorithmic Justice

The pursuit of fairness, transparency, and accountability in automated decision-making systems. It seeks to identify and address biases that disproportionately harm marginalised communities.

Care

An approach to technology design, governance, and funding that prioritises human wellbeing, safety, dignity, and relationships over efficiency, extraction, or profit. In feminist technology, care requires attention to the social and emotional impacts of technological systems on communities.

Consent

The principle that individuals should have meaningful knowledge of, and control over, how their data, identities, and participation are used. Consent must be informed, voluntary, ongoing, and revocable rather than assumed or hidden within complex terms and conditions.

Collective Wellbeing

A framework that evaluates technological success based on benefits to communities and social ecosystems rather than individual gain or market growth alone. It emphasises shared safety, inclusion, justice, and long-term community resilience.

Community-Led Innovation

The development of technologies shaped by the needs, knowledge, and priorities of the communities they are intended to serve. Community members participate as decision-makers and co-creators rather than passive beneficiaries.

Data Justice

A framework that examines how data is collected, governed, and used, with attention to power, rights, equity, and social justice. Data justice advocates for data practices that protect communities from harm and exclusion.

Decolonial Partnerships

Collaborative relationships that challenge historical and ongoing power imbalances between funders and funded organisations. They prioritise reciprocity, local leadership, shared decision-making, and respect for diverse knowledge systems.

Ecosystem Approach

The networks of trust, collaboration, care, and community engagement that enable feminist technology initiatives to succeed. Although often invisible in budgets, relational infrastructure is essential to sustainable social change.

Learning-Oriented Funding

A funding philosophy that values experimentation, reflection, adaptation, and knowledge generation. It recognises that meaningful innovation often emerges through iteration and learning rather than predetermined outcomes.

Relational Infrastructure

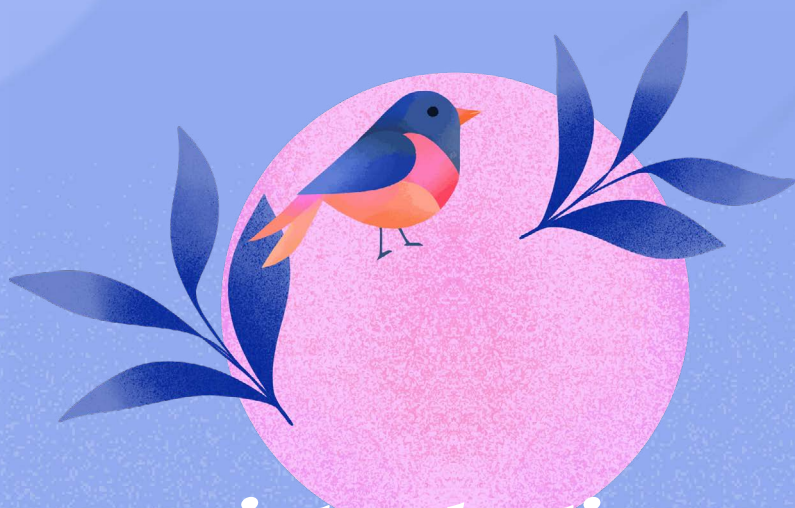
A perspective that recognises technology as dependent on interconnected actors, institutions, movements, policies, and communities. Sustainable impact requires investment in the broader environment surrounding a technology, not only the technology itself.

Structural Change

Efforts aimed at transforming the underlying social, economic, political, and technological systems that produce inequality, rather than addressing only their symptoms.

Trust-Based Funding

A funding approach that centres partnership, flexibility, and mutual accountability. It reduces unnecessary reporting burdens and provides organisations with the autonomy to adapt resources according to evolving community needs.



introduction

Across Africa, feminist organisations, collectives, and solo builders are developing tools that address gender-based violence, reproductive health, digital safety, economic exclusion, and political participation. Examples include Pollicy's ***Digital SafeTea Project***, which works to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence and strengthen digital safety; GRIT's (Gender Rights In Tech) ***Zuzi AI chatbot***, which provides trauma-informed information on legal rights and sexual reproductive health; and UNICEF's ***Okya app***, an open-source period tracker and education tool co-created with and for girls to ensure accessibility regardless of digital literacy. These technologies are keeping people safe, expanding access to care, and building the conditions for women and marginalised communities to participate fully in digital life. However, they remain chronically underfunded.

One may assume that this shortfall is caused by a dearth of funders or shortage of money. It seems to actually be a mismatch between how funding works and what feminist technology actually needs. This concern reflects broader critiques from feminist funding organisations and movement actors, like the ***African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)***, that argue for funding approaches that recognise the long-term, relational, and community-rooted nature of feminist work. Grant cycles reward speed and scale. Feminist tech requires time, trust, and deep community grounding. Funders ask for measurable outputs where movement building doesn't present fast or easy metrics. The result is that the tools and organisations doing the most important work are the least likely to survive the funding environment designed to support them.

This framing paper argues that changing this requires more than increasing the volume of funding. It requires changing the terms. The Sus10 Principles, developed by Pollicy, offer funders a practical framework for doing that, grounded in the lived experience of feminist tech builders and advocates across Africa, and in the growing body of evidence about what the ecosystem needs to flourish.

What is *feminist technology?*

Feminist technology, as we define it, is any technology that explicitly challenges power dynamics by applying feminist principles to design, development, deployment, and governance. It centres equity, inclusion, and justice. It prioritises care, consent, and collective wellbeing. It values contextual, locally grounded, community-led innovation. Critically, it is not technology that merely serves women as a market segment, not period-tracking apps built on extractive data practices, not pink-washed consumer tech that reproduces surveillance and discrimination under an inclusive banner.

How is feminist technology *currently funded?*

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Feminist technology is funded across a range of models. Some organisations are self-financed, relying on revenue generated through their own products and services. Others draw on government backing, crowdfunding, or impact investment. Private sector collaboration and grant-based funding are also common, with the latter being the dominant model for civil society-led feminist tech work in the Global South. Each model carries its own assumptions about what success looks like, who gets to define it, and what conditions are attached to resources. The Sus10 Principles are addressed primarily to grant-makers and institutional funders, because that is where the greatest leverage for change currently sits, and because the grant-based model, done well, has the most potential to resource feminist technology on its own terms.

how we got here

The Sus10 Principles were shaped across three moments of collective thinking.

The first was a workshop at the **AWID Forum** in 2024, where Pollicy brought together grantmakers, feminist tech leaders, and advocates to explore what it would take to sustainably fund feminist technology. Forty-five participants from across the Global South spent time mapping the funding landscape, identifying what felt broken, and imagining what a better-resourced feminist tech future could look like. The energy in the room made clear that this was a conversation the sector had been waiting to have.

The second was a convening in Kampala on the sidelines of DataFest Africa 2025, where Pollicy gathered feminist practitioners, technologists, and researchers to ground this work in a systematic landscape analysis of feminist technology across Africa. That research on the African feminist technology landscape, published alongside this paper, documents the structural constraints shaping what gets built, who builds it, and who benefits. Its findings run directly through the arguments made here.

The third was intended to be a reconvening at RightsCon 2026 in Zambia, where we had planned to stress-test these principles with a broader community before publication. That session was cancelled and we are moving forward regardless, because the urgency of this conversation cannot wait for the right conference room.

what we learned

At the AWID convening, participants were asked two questions that cut to the heart of this paper's argument: how can feminist technology challenge traditional power structures and solve global issues affecting women's rights, and what role should women's rights advocates and organisations play in shaping tech policy and innovation to align with feminist values?

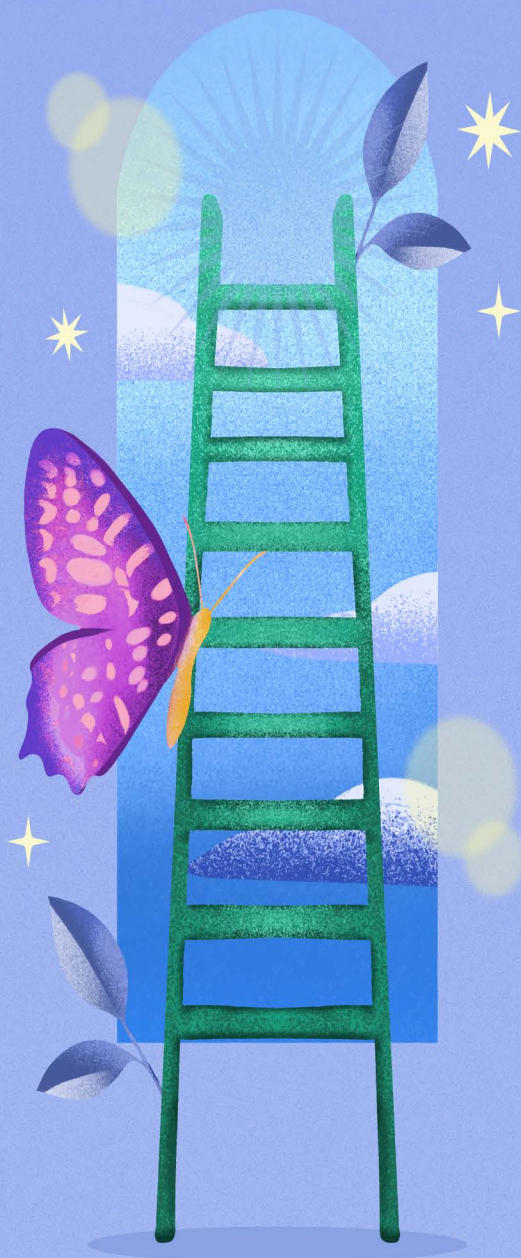
Their responses mapped the terrain of what feminist technology is seeking to do:

Issue	What feminist technology can offer
Safety	Mobilisation of existing systems for protection
Sexual and reproductive health rights	Access to information and services
Solidarity	Connectivity across movements
Censorship	Free expression, acknowledgment, and prevention
Sex work	Access to finance and legal protection
Voice and knowledge	Digital archiving and documentation of lived realities
Big tech profits	Research to denounce and measure harm

These are some of the most pressing issues of our time, and feminist technology is already developing responses to them. The question is whether funders are willing to resource this work at the scale and with the trust it deserves.

The participants co-designed strategies to achieve the ideal imagined funded tech future. This was important for the funders and the funded to develop ways to have shared understanding and sharing of resources to sustain feminist technology initiatives.





Guided by the question **“How do we fund our imagined tech future?”** the participants co-designed the following strategies, which led to the development of the Sus10 principles:

- Partner with donors beyond technology-specific work, embedding feminist tech into broader programmatic relationships.
- Encourage existing donor partners to resource feminist technology initiatives within their current portfolios.
- Invest in technical capacity building for feminist tech builders and organisations.
- Co-create funding mechanisms with feminist tech builders, rather than designing grant structures around them.
- Fund the infrastructure that feminist technology depends on, not only the products built on top of it.
- Develop a genuine understanding of what feminist tech interventions actually cost.
- Create sustained spaces for learning and exchange across tech and non-tech feminist communities.
- Offer flexible, trust-based funding that gives organisations room to adapt and iterate.
- Pursue commercial partnerships that do not compromise feminist values or community accountability.



Why do current *funding models fall short?*

The funding models that dominate the sector were not designed with feminist technology in mind. They were designed for a different kind of work such as discrete projects with clear start and end dates, measurable outputs, and straightforward theories of change. Feminist technology rarely fits this shape. Building a tool that serves survivors of gender-based violence requires sustained community engagement, iterative design, and trust that takes years to develop. Funding it as a twelve-month project, with quarterly reports and a final evaluation, produces something technically functional and practically inadequate.

Our landscape analysis of feminist technology across Africa found that women-led ventures consistently receive less investment than their male-led counterparts, and that technologies addressing women's health, safety, and wellbeing are routinely undervalued within prevailing investment logics. Though these technologies show market potential as well as social relevance, they are assessed within funding environments that do not consistently recognise women's needs as urgent or investable. Male-dominated investment spaces frequently lack both interest in and understanding of the realities these technologies seek to address.

The imported assumptions of dominant funding models further compound this. Much of the capital flowing into African feminist technology comes with frameworks developed elsewhere, in Silicon Valley, in Geneva, in London, and applied without adequate adaptation. The result is a sector shaped by funder priorities rather than community needs. This logic makes sense within a commercial investment framework. It makes less sense for funders whose stated mandate is social transformation. When foundations and donors apply investment-world metrics to feminist technology, they end up funding for what we, the authors, deem as the wrong things, namely scale over depth, replication over adaptation, outputs over relationships.

There is also a structural absence. As of the writing of this paper, there is one dedicated feminist technology fund globally: **Numun Fund**. The entire ecosystem of feminist tech builders, researchers, advocates, and movement organisations is competing for resources within funding infrastructures that were built for something else.

The sector needs funders willing to extend trust, offer flexibility, and resource the slow, relational, community-grounded work that makes feminist technology actually feminist.



the sus10 principles

These principles were co-created with feminist tech builders, funders, and advocates across two convenings and present a framework for funders to interrogate their own practices and shift towards more equitable, trust-based relationships with the organisations and movements they resource.

Fund Structural Change

Feminist technology must fundamentally reimagine technological systems, not add feminist language to existing extractive structures. Funders should ask whether the technologies they resource are genuinely challenging power or merely improving the efficiency of systems that harm. This means being willing to fund work that is explicitly political, that names patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism as structural conditions shaping digital life.

Resource the Global South on Its Own Terms

There is an obvious funding gap between Global North and Global South in feminist technology. This reflects whose knowledge systems are valued, whose problems are considered investable, and whose solutions are trusted. Funders must actively dismantle this disparity, through equitable grant sizes, locally led decision-making, and a genuine willingness to follow the priorities of African, Asian, and Latin American feminist tech communities rather than importing frameworks from elsewhere.

Build Decolonial Partnerships

Collaboration with feminist tech organisations must be rooted in horizontal, reciprocal relationships that decenter colonial power dynamics. Throughout the Pollicy lifetime, we have come across demanding funders who wield their power to abuse and destabilise our mission. There is a need to move away from donor-recipient models towards genuine partnership that value shared decision-making, transparent resource distribution, and respect for the knowledge and agency of funded organisations. It also means funders doing their own political education rather than expecting funded partners to explain the basics.

Fund Creative and Movement Work as Core, Not Extra

Feminist technology is not only apps and platforms. This narrowmindedness stems from a lack of imagination and foresight. Feminist technology is also games, zines, murals, podcasts, and performances that shift norms, build collective power, and make data joyful. Funders routinely under-resource creative and movement-building work, treating it as supplementary to real tech development. The Sus10 principles insist that this work is the infrastructure and demand it to be funded accordingly.

5 Demand Ethical Corporate Engagement

Where private sector actors engage with feminist technology, that engagement must go beyond corporate social responsibility gestures. Funders should use their leverage to require genuine structural commitment from corporate partners through transparent data practices, equitable labour conditions, and accountability to the communities their technologies serve.

6 Centre Algorithmic and Data Justice

Grantmaking processes themselves can reproduce the biases they claim to address. Funders should examine their own systems such as who their application processes exclude, whose organisations are deemed credible, and how power operates in funding decisions. Beyond their own practices, funders should actively resource work that challenges algorithmic bias and advances data justice, particularly for communities facing compounded marginalisation.

7 Fund the True Cost of Feminist Work

Feminist tech interventions aimed at structural change are expensive because they take time, require sustained community engagement, and carry emotional and organisational labour that never appears in a budget line. Funders should resource the full cost of this work, including organisational development, staff wellbeing, and the relational infrastructure that makes feminist tech possible.

8 Think in Ecosystems, Not Projects

Feminist technology does not succeed in isolation. It requires a surrounding ecosystem of research, advocacy, policy influence, capacity building, and movement solidarity. Funders who resource a single product without resourcing the ecosystem it depends on are setting it up to fail. Multi-year, flexible, unrestricted funding that trusts organisations to direct resources where they are most needed is the practical expression of this principle.

9 Invest in Memory and Knowledge

Too often, knowledge leaves with individuals, projects and funding cycles. Feminist technology requires investment in documentation, archives, storytelling, research and spaces where experiences can be shared across generations and contexts. Sustainable ecosystems are not built through innovation. They are built through remembering.

10 Fund not just Success but Learning

Feminist technology does not emerge fully formed. It is built through iteration, experimentation, and sometimes failure. Yet funding models often reward certainty and polished outcomes while leaving little room for organizations to adapt, pause, or even change course. Learning is not evidence that projects have gone off track. It is evidence that organizations are paying attention. Funders should create conditions where reflection, adaptation, and even failure are recognized as part of building meaningful and responsive technologies.

What this *looks like in practice*

Imagine a feminist technology ecosystem where funders and funded organisations operate as true partners seeking a common goal, where multi-year flexible grants give builders the runway to co-create with communities rather than racing against reporting deadlines. Where a collective in Kampala developing a digital safety tool for women human rights defenders does not have to shrink its ambitions to fit a twelve-month log frame. Where a youth-led platform in Dakar working on reproductive health information can iterate, fail, learn, and try again without losing its funding.

In this ecosystem, creative work is treated as infrastructure. Creative and alternative methods of engagement are treated as valid methodologies and concrete knowledge systems. Movement building is resourced alongside product development in organisations that have the stability to invest in their people, their culture, and their long-term capacity rather than lurching from grant to grant to keep the lights on. Donors sit in working groups alongside the organisations they fund, developing shared understanding of what the work actually requires. Metrics of success are unique to each community and the definition of impact is community led. New dedicated feminist technology funds emerge, building on the model that Numun Fund has pioneered, so that the entire ecosystem is no longer dependent on a single institution.

To many in our sector, this may seem as a distant vision. The strategies to get there were mapped by the participants at our previous gatherings, and they are straightforward in asking for flexible funding, co-creation between donors and builders, capacity investment, and commercial partnerships that do not compromise feminist values. What we need now is commitment.





what comes next

This paper is the continuation of a longstanding conversation and Pollicy is committed to keeping this momentum going through a series of engagements in 2026 and beyond.

We are releasing a podcast series on feminist tech funding, exploring these principles through conversation with builders, funders, and advocates from across the ecosystem. You can listen to the podcast [here](#).

At ***Data Tamasha in Zanzibar*** in August 2026, Pollicy will convene a funders roundtable to share and stress-test these principles with a global audience. This follows our funders roundtable at DataFest Africa in 2023, and continues our commitment to holding this conversation in African spaces, with African feminist tech communities at the centre.

Later in the year, we will be bringing together a working group and hosting a workshop to take the Sus10 Principles from framework to practice.

If you are a funder wanting to explore what trust-based feminist tech funding looks like in practice, or a civil society organisation ready to advocate for better resourcing of this work, we want to hear from you.

Reach us at [**info@pollicy.org**](mailto:info@pollicy.org)

