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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Ecorys celebrates International Women's Day 2024 with launch of Scottish Government's Women and Girls Fund.***

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**Marking International Women's Day 2024, Ecorys and our partners The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Chapters in Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia are proud to announce our appointment on behalf of the Government of Scotland to deliver a new, £3 million, four-year Women and Girls Fund (WGF) in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

The WGF, forming part of the Scottish Government's International Development Equalities Programme, will deliver grant and capacity support to women and girl-led organisations (WGLOs) across Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia, aiming – broadly – to contribute to the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). The programme will commence on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, with an initial implementation period of up to four years. The budget for this Fund is up to £750k per annum for 4 years, or a total of £3 million over four years.

Announcing the launch of the fund, Scotland's Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, Kaukab Stewart said:

"Gender inequality remains one of the greatest human rights challenges globally, and we must work together to address this. Reflecting our commitment to equalise power, the Women and Girls Fund will provide direct support to local women and girl-led organisations in our Sub-Saharan African partner countries.

"Direct funding is central to driving transformational change; this fund will empower women and girls, locally, to define and meet their own priorities.

"As we mark International Women's Day, it is fitting that we launch this incredibly valuable programme, which puts feminist principles into action and will help us to advocate for a world without gender inequality."



The Fund will be designed in line with the Scottish Government’s feminist international development principles, centring women and girls as experts by experience, with the knowledge to identify challenges in their own lives, families and communities, as well as to develop potential solutions, in all aspects of the programme.

Grant support will be prioritised for initiatives and activities that challenge existing, inequitable social norms and empower WGLOs and women, girls, and their communities to “do things differently”. We will ensure impactful funding to WGLOs through a bottom-up, participatory approach that engages women and girls in all aspects of grant design/delivery.

Critical attention will be given to ensuring downward accountability from the fund to WGLOs, by building in structures and mechanisms to ensure WGLO representatives play an advisory role at each stage of design/delivery and have decision-making power about the allocation of grants. In doing so, the management of the Women and Girls Fund will aim to move beyond making sure that everyone’s voice is heard (participation), to ensuring that everyone’s voice actually influences/informs what is done (empowerment).

Key to the success of the WGF will be in reaching out to identify and support small, nascent WGLOs with grants that are responsive to self-defined needs and priorities. Ecorys and FAWE will undertake rigorous analysis and engagement with these WGLOs during the fund design so that they are given opportunity to define what they do, how they want to do it, and what is needed to deliver (e.g., in terms of flexibility, levels/length of resourcing, and wider support beyond the grant itself).

*Through a highly participatory approach we will ensure that the process of grant-making can, in itself, challenge and transform structural inequalities that .impede women’s full potential and the realisation of their rights.*

Ecorys Team Leader Mpala Nkonkomalimba added: “The funding opportunity cannot be coming at a more opportune time, as women and girls are still struggling to have voice in decision making processes and with the global economic downturn, they continue to be the face of poverty. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) capacities to respond to the many emerging global and national issues affecting women and girls needs to be built and what is exciting is that the fund is planned to be participatory with CSOs themselves co-creating the funding mechanism.”

Speaking on behalf of FAWE in Malawi, Forum for Women Educationalists Malawi’s Wesley Chabwera concludes “This fund will immensely contribute towards gender transformation in our country and empower women and girls to achieve their aspirations and live dignified and fulfilling lives.”

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### **Background Notes:**

**The Scottish Governments Women and Girls Fund.** The Women and Girls Fund (WGF) is the first new fund developed as part of the Scottish Government's new International Development Equalities Programme being developed under the International Development Fund (IDF). In line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, the overall aim of the fund is to provide appropriately targeted direct funding to support women and girls/women and girl-led organisations (WGLOs) in Malawi, Zambia, and Rwanda, with the advancement of gender equality and the rights of women and girls as a principal objective. Gender equality is therefore the main objective of this programme and is fundamental to its design and expected results.

The programme will be delivered in line with the Scottish Government's International Development Principles, commitments to 'do no harm', and to be Global South-led. The programme will take a participatory approach to develop and deliver interventions that tackle inequalities experienced by women and girls and/or support organisations that advocate for their rights.

**Ecorys** is a global research-based consultancy that helps our clients make a positive impact on society. We are leaders in research and consulting, monitoring and evaluation, programme management and communications services. We provide the evidence and advice that our clients need to tackle the issues that affect communities around the world. Our staff are justifiably proud of our innovative and thought-provoking contributions to policy and programme delivery. We are an independent employee-owned company. We combine our passion and our business professionalism to make a difference in the world. With over 600 employees from over 40 nationalities, speaking over 30 different languages, we operate across the globe with offices in Rotterdam, Brussels, the United Kingdom, several other European cities, India and Africa. We work in over 150 countries globally.

Our global work in respect of communities and society recognises that people are at the centre of a flourishing society. Our aim is to ensure that people of all ages and backgrounds are protected and supported to help them lead fulfilling lives. We help our clients including national and international government organisations and civil society to implement effective programmes to support and protect people and communities across a wide range of policy areas. This includes:

- **Poverty, debt and financial inclusion:** overcoming the cycle of poverty and ensuring fair access to financial services
- **Equality, diversity and social inclusion:** supporting an equitable society and tackling discrimination
- **Culture, sport and heritage:** increasing the access, quality and benefits of sport, culture and heritage



- **Children, young people and families:** supporting and protecting the next generation to lead happy, healthy and fulfilled lives

**The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)** is a membership-based pan-African Non-Governmental Organisation that operates [through 34 National Chapters](#) in sub-Saharan Africa to promote girls' and women's education. FAWE's [vision, mission and goal](#) are all resolute on the well-being of girls' education. In order to accomplish its mission of 'promoting gender equity and equality in education in Africa' FAWE uses a [holistic four-pronged approach](#).

FAWE is a non-political, voluntary, charitable, non-sectarian, not-for-profit organisation and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ideology, colour, nationality or religious persuasion. However, its target beneficiaries and constituency are primarily girls and women.

To design and deliver the WGF, FAWE's chapters in Zambia, Malawi and Rwanda will play a critical role in the participative co-design, and ensuring the entire programme responds to needs and priorities identified by WGLO's themselves.