Better Funding Case Study

GreenCheck:

Youth-Led Philanthropy for *Climate Action*



Introductory Note

This case study was developed in a Q&A format with Beverley Choo from GreenCheck, a youth-led philanthropic organisation working to redirect resources to community-led climate action. The reflections are shared in Beverley's own voice, offering insights into GreenCheck's journey, values, and approach to funding and supporting grassroots partners.

We are sharing this case study to highlight how youth-led philanthropy can challenge conventional funding practices and create more equitable, sustainable, and collaborative approaches to climate action.

This case study may be particularly useful for funders and practitioners interested in:

- **Decolonising philanthropy** by recognising community leadership and sharing power and decision-making with local partners.
- **Building long-term, trust-based partnerships** through flexible, unrestricted funding, simplified processes, and sustained relationships.
- **Mobilising resources creatively,** including collaborations with artists, crowdfunding, and support that extends beyond financial contributions.
- **Strengthening youth leadership and climate justice** through capacity building, meaningful participation, and an intersectional approach to funding.

The Genesis Story of GreenCheck

In 2020, I was an undergraduate going through a phase of massive climate anxiety, where I constantly felt like I wasn't doing enough even though I was already involved in youth environmental groups and movements. Then, when I found out about Yale's *Global University Climate Forum's* call for projects, I brought together a small group (who would later become my co-founders) to start brainstorming. After several months of discussions and conversations with professors and climate activists on the ground in various parts of the world, we decided to focus on *redirecting resources to community-led climate action groups in the most-affected regions.* GreenCheck was born out of that existential crisis, but also out of a real observation of need and gap.

Our vision is a world where climate-impacted communities have equitable access to resources, autonomy in shaping their futures, and the power to lead a just transition, all while being supported by a global ecosystem rooted in solidarity and mutual care.

Now, five years later, we've remained a youth-led effort that has redirected over USD 80,000 to our Partners and to youth climate empowerment programming. We've also expanded our work to include the GreenCheck Solidarity Academy in 2024, a training and internship program that empowers young people in places most impacted by climate change to become climate leaders in their communities. *The passion of our team, urgency of the climate crisis, and the hunger to act for a better future among the young people in our ecosystem is what has kept us going all this while.*

GreenCheck's Model of Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation

GreenCheck was created because we wanted to ***redefine how resources flow to groups doing climate action on the ground.*** To go beyond the unreliable, short-term, and demanding grants that were typical of climate funding, we decided to invest in fundraising collaborations with local creatives to support our grassroots Partners.

We believe that art is a powerful tool for education and to inspire action. So, ***collaborating with local creatives to spotlight their work while also fundraising for our Partners came as a natural decision.*** So far, we've worked with visual artists, bakers, photographers, and even second-hand clothing efforts based in Singapore, the Philippines, and the Dominican Republic.

Of course, grants are still a major part of how GreenCheck fundraises for ourselves and for our Partners. We also recently held a traditional crowdfunding campaign for our fifth year anniversary which was a huge success, thanks to the generosity of 59 individuals. As we pursue financial sustainability, we're exploring diverse ways to attain funding that align with our vision for more equitable funding structures for true climate justice.

GreenCheck Leading the Way in Decolonising Fundraising

A lot of philanthropy and charity work is rooted in colonial biases and practices, such as viewing communities that they support as mere victims instead of actors. Funder relationships are also extremely imbalanced, which often entail a one-way allocation of resources, and then demanding to see results (where “impact” is defined by the funders themselves, of course). Funders want to see numbers and reports after a one-year grant, which aren't always representative of the long-term nature of the solution they invested in. Another issue is dependency created by funders, which further entrenches the power imbalance between funders and communities. Charities and philanthropies should work towards sustainable solutions that communities can sustain themselves so they can have ownership over the projects.

For us, decolonising philanthropy started with introspection. When starting GreenCheck, my co-founders and I asked ourselves questions about power, money, and how to work with groups in completely different contexts from our own. We recognised that we are not positioned to do the work our Partners are doing in the Philippines or in Colombia, for example. We questioned our own positionality: what privileges do we have, and how can we get involved in a way that does not replicate exploitative practices? ***Colonisation was about exploiting people and exploiting Nature, so GreenCheck tries to do the opposite. We recognise Partners as equals, listen actively, and begin our partnerships with, "What do you want, and how do you think GreenCheck is best placed to help you achieve that?"***

The Power of Long-Term, Multi-Year Funding

Longevity is something a lot of development organisations simply do not prioritise. GreenCheck's partnerships are long-term because we believe in our Partners' causes and want to grow together. Because impact in the climate space is sometimes not immediate, GreenCheck doesn't track numbers month-to-month. What we are looking to build is a larger ecosystem within the climate justice community. We believe that ***creating tight-knit relationships is itself a form of impact,*** one that many traditional donors might not take into account.

Transparency is also a cornerstone of this longevity. ***Partners are included in a great deal of GreenCheck's decision-making, and together they decide how funds are used,*** including redistributing internal funds to Partners who have more urgent projects and are more in need at a given moment. Our Partners have consistently feedbacked to us how valuable our partnership is for them, with some recent examples being:

> **GreenCheck has really amplified our impact & we are so grateful. We would not have been able to do this alone. Really makes a huge difference in the money, resources, and attention for [us]. Solidarity is also a huge emotional support.**

> **What's been most valuable is that the partnership has evolved beyond the monetary stuff into something more relational and I think that's actually way better for long-term growth. Real relationship-building, showing up, creating space for each other to thrive.**

GreenCheck: A Visibility Boosting Partner As Well!

Visibility online can go a long way. Some Partners don't have the capacity to host their own websites or social media accounts, let alone translate their work into English to reach a wider audience. That's where GreenCheck steps in to fill that gap. Giving Partners their own page on our website and posting about their work on our social media are also great ways to perpetually spotlight our Partners' work throughout the year, rather than limiting their appearance to a page or two on an annual report. Through social media posts, newsletter features, and events, we hope that more people can learn about the great work our Partners are doing and will be moved to support them. *A good funder/partner should invest in helping their grantee partners secure greater sources of support and achieve financial sustainability!*

Flexibility, Automated Renewals, Crowdfunders, and More...

Besides being a re-grantor, GreenCheck actively seeks out grants and is constantly crowdfunding for our Partners so that they have additional sources of funding. We also don't require reports and *all re-granted funding is unrestricted to enable Partners to have full autonomy over their resources.* In this manner, our partnerships are truly trust-based.

I'd also like to point out that for us, "long-term" means that renewal as a GreenCheck Partner is guaranteed year-on-year, rather than appealed annually or otherwise in the case of traditional grantmaking. *This gives our Partners a peace of mind, knowing that they can always count on GreenCheck* and that they won't have to worry if another funding source or ally might be lost in the next "financial year".

The Importance of the Intersectional Lens in Climate Philanthropy

I think the biggest issue is that funders don't quite understand what climate justice is. In fact, many of them are already interested in climate justice, they just don't know it! ***Funders interested in tackling the root causes of any form of social inequality are also actually invested in tackling the root causes of climate injustice.***

The challenge here is to think about intersectionality, which is something that the funding ecosystem is not accustomed to. Funders often have funding pillars that distinguish between causes, like "sustainable agriculture", "girls education", and "accessible healthcare". What many fail to understand is that ***these are all climate justice issues*** — you can't have sustainable agriculture if unpredictable weather is jeopardising farming, girls cannot receive education if their schools and homes are flooded, and a growing threat to accessible healthcare is meeting the needs of ever-increasing heat-related conditions.

Hands On Training for Young People

GreenCheck's work as a re-grantor and capacity builder for our Partners is made possible by our team of dedicated volunteers. Youth from around the world join GreenCheck as a volunteer team member and get to develop their skills in social media, grantwriting, research, and more, all in support of our grassroots Partners! We hope to serve as an accessible entry point for those looking to get their climate journey started, and to show young people that ***everyone has skills and knowledge that they can apply to advance climate action.***

We also have a flagship internship and training programme called the GreenCheck Solidarity Academy (GSA) that is dedicated to empowering youth in MAPA with little to no background in climate action. We decided to implement the GSA in response to the inaccessibility of many youth climate programmes for those with no background in climate and/or are from MAPA, as well as overwhelming demand for opportunities in climate action from young people. In fact, ***the inaugural edition of the GSA received over 1,000 applications for just six spots!*** We're very proud of the impact the GSA has had so far, where we have welcomed 19 interns from 16 countries



BETTER FUNDING LENS ON THIS APPROACH

GreenCheck, a philanthropic organisation with a global presence, founded and run by youth, resourcing youth-led climate movements, and training young climate champions, is definitely leading the way in solving the climate crisis. *GreenCheck's model of philanthropy is most progressive, equitable, inclusive, and trusting in its principles, approaches, and systems.* Not only do they ensure their grants reach local actors, but the grants are also multi-year with automated and flexible renewals, ensuring utilisation autonomy remains with the local actors. GreenCheck takes it a step further by actively building the capacities of its grantee partners, providing them consistent visibility on GreenCheck's website and social media, *measuring impact long-term rather than month to month, reducing reporting pressures, and running programs* to train young climate champions of the future. Vocal and clear on its principles and positions, GreenCheck actively advocates for and practices decolonisation of philanthropy to ensure that not only are resources shared, but so are power and decision-making. Better Funding is delighted to celebrate such progressive philanthropy led by young people who are showing the way toward a better world.

BETTER FUNDING

You can learn more about
GreenCheck's inspiring work here:

https://www.greencheck.earth/

With thanks to Beverley Choo at GreenCheck for sharing her insights and experiences for this case study.

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