

Youth Voices in Generation Equality and Action Coalitions

*“We all have ambitions, we have dreams.
We are the scientists, the members of parliament. We are the Presidents.”*

All quotes in this document were captured during the sessions and come from the girl and youth participants.

Background

“In a meeting we are there so the host can take pictures of us and say that they are involving youth. Millennials and the older generation do not give us space to talk about our passion and share our own truths. We need you to trust us when we share our opinions and talk about our passions”

On 17th September, the Adolescent Girl Investment Plan (AGIP)¹ in collaboration with the Generation Equality Youth Task Force hosted two intergenerational dialogues between Action Coalition leaders and over 150 girls and young people. They shared their ideas on how they want to engage in Generation Equality and the Action Coalitions and spoke to the issues that are important to them. Action Coalition leaders shared their plans and their reflections on meaningful girls' engagement.

Summary of recommendations

- We call on Action Coalition leaders to advocate for and resource our meaningful engagement as they develop their vision, goals and plans.
- We call on Action Coalition leaders and GEF stakeholders to look at the issues that affect adolescent girls in an interconnected and intersectional lens and not to work in silos across the 6 Action Coalitions.
- We call on Action Coalition leaders to continue to join intergenerational dialogues.
- We call on Action Coalition leaders to listen to and prioritise the issues that matter to us.

Ways to engage girls and young people in the Action Coalitions

- Hold Action Coalition specific dialogues with specific groups e.g. Feminist Movements and Leadership and adolescent girls. It is important to have a special conversation on youth, peace and security linked to the compact on women, peace and security.

¹ The Adolescent Girls Investment Plan (AGIP) is a global partnership co-chaired by Plan International and Girls Not Brides (GNB). AGIP aims to stimulate the development of investment frameworks and tools for decision-makers to confidently deliver a comprehensive approach to advance gender equality through girl-centred approaches and actions. Its members include International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE/ODI), Population Council, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Malala Fund and, Women Deliver. Other technical supporters and partners include Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Ford Foundation, She Decides and, Save the Children.

- Formalised girls and youth consultative mechanisms that each AC leader engages with.
- Contact young people through social media for youth consultations and to reach a wider audience.
- Share information on Action Coalition membership through online and offline means.
- Support informal girl and youth-led groups to join and resource their meaningful engagement as members, recognising their resourcing limitations compared to a government or INGO.
- Collaborate with girls and youth networks and coalitions to do outreach and engagement.
- Invite girls and young people to workshops and meetings where you are developing your vision, blueprint and any formal youth engagement mechanisms. They should be involved in all decision-making processes, including financial inclusion and economic planning.
- Recognise that girls and young people are not the same group. Adolescent girls face different challenges and discriminations; they have other needs to be considered when joining decision-making spaces. Engaging young people does not mean you have engaged girls.
- Engage community-based girl and youth-led groups, grassroots organisations, networks and associations, informal and formal, not just the participation of a select few individuals.

Gender Based Violence (GBV)

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Prioritise child, early and forced marriage and unions! We need to tackle the root causes, recognise child marriage is child abuse and tackle it in humanitarian settings too, like refugee camps.
- Address the root causes of gender-based violence.
- Pay attention to the increase of violence and femicides against women and girls.
- Redefine GBV to include non-binary, trans and gender non-conforming groups.
- Recognise violence, racism and discrimination against indigenous and afro-descendant girls and women in the justice system.
- Work with families and communities, particularly boys and young men through community organising and awareness raising to transform gender norms.
- Secure more resourcing for justice measures, this needs to be accessible for girls in rural areas, in terms of information and infrastructure.
- Prioritise street harassment.
- Secure increased budget from governments to implement laws!
- Prioritise psycho-social support for sexual violence survivors.
- Implement and enforce existing sexual violence laws.
- Secure government investment in shelters and safe houses for gender-based violence survivors.
- Establish a special tribunal to address sexual violence cases.

- Work closely with gatekeepers to ensure girls and young people are not left out of decisions that affect their lives.
- Develop policies on intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and online cybercrimes.
- Establish a special coordination unit that focuses on prevention, response and prosecution of SGBV cases timely
- Train Community Health workers, Volunteers and Community Health Extension Workers in ensuring that GBV response is done in a manner that is safe.
- Work with peers to prevent violence.

QUOTES FROM THE DIALOGUES

- *“We need to stop protecting perpetrators! We need to involve men and boys in GBV intervention and ensure that justice is taken! When GBV is handled at community level justice is not taken, parents negotiate with perpetrators and they are free to harm again.”* Young woman, country unknown
- *“We need to fund more initiatives for GBV justice measures, this needs to be accessible for girls in rural areas, in terms of information and infrastructure”.* Young woman, country unknown
- *“How is a child marrying a 60-year-old man ‘child marriage’? This is not child marriage; this is child abuse. We need to start calling it what it is, trafficking, rape, defilement. This is what it is. This is a big problem in my region”* Girl, Zambia.
- *We also need to tackle harmful gendered norms – they ask us ‘when are you getting married?’ or ‘if you can’t clean the dishes, who is going to marry you?’ This makes girls feel like our value is marriage – we need to emphasise your goal in life is not to get married. We are powerful and we can do anything we put our minds to.”* Girl, Zambia.
- *“Child marriage has increased in refugee settings as families cannot provide food and shelter for their children and resort to child marriage to protect them.”* Young woman, country unknown
- *“We need to call for governments and donors to put money where their mouth is, especially in terms of reaching girls and young women in rural areas”.* Young woman, country unknown
- *“How are we looking at gender? Are we missing out non-binary groups by using this language. Many women and non-binary groups fail to identify that they are victims of violence due to difficulties in the legal classification of violence, they face further challenges in the path to justice particularly when complaints are only taken in certain languages.”* Young woman, country not known

What are Action Coalition leaders saying?

- UK FCDO: How can we scale up response to prevent GBV, particularly in the current pandemic?
- Breakthrough: How do you highlight the issue of GBV and how intersectional it is? We have had discussions around term gender in gender-based violence and those beyond the binaries as part of conversation.
- Using tools like intergenerational dialogue we often miss on engagement with elderly men, while we talk about GBV across stakeholder, at the end of date, family and home is very important and the engagement of men and boys engaged as allies

Bodily Integrity and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Child, early and forced marriage and unions and Female Genital Mutilation, which are exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Other Harmful practices such as intersex genital mutilation .
- Provide access to safe abortion, post abortion care, contraceptives, information and other SRHR services. This includes for young adolescents.
- Promote girls' autonomy and their right to decide on their own bodies and lives.
- Provide comprehensive sexuality education, which is the most important component of cultural changes. It must not be grounded in religion and must include an understanding of young people's sexual diversity and an intercultural approach.
- Prioritise sexuality too and the right to self-define one's gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Ensure contraception access is also incorporated into policy frameworks.
- Provide menstrual health management-provide menstrual products (sanitary towels & facilities) for all girls and young women, and specifically those from vulnerable communities and rural areas.
- Tackle teenage pregnancy and support young mothers to return to school.
- Support girls and young women who have already got married or entered in early unions to get back to school.
- Provide access to adolescent youth friendly services and information including on sexually transmitted infections and HIV treatment.
- Invest in disaggregated data on Reproductive Health among young people below 15 years.
- Employ intersectional approach while addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. It is important to have a differentiated approach for children, adolescents and youth, and consider their specific needs.
- Ensure enough resourcing for youth friendly SRHR services.

QUOTES FROM THE DIALOGUES

- *“We need to prioritise sexuality! There needs to be a new vision of what it is to be male, masculinity, femininity and even diversity. Recognize the right of each person to identify themselves as they feel and believe. It is the vocation and right of each person.”* Young woman, country unknown
- *“The common SRHR issues affecting young people include teenage pregnancy, child marriage, unsafe abortion, knowledge gap on SRHR, unfriendly youth services, and unfavourable policies. Gender inequalities are the root cause of teenage pregnancies and child marriage.”* Girls, Uganda and Kenya
- *We must have “legal, safe and free abortion - abortion as an essential health service. [We must also recognise the] importance of an intersectional approach since there is a differentiated impact on girls and young people”.* Young woman, country unknown

What are Action Coalition leaders saying?

- The lack of access to abortion clinics such as in Italy and Latin America and access to health clinic and contraceptives is an extra challenge in the current pandemic
- We have had a few meetings in the AC and are discussing and how we narrow down our focus areas which is difficult, there are a broad range of issues
- We need to take into consideration the impacts of COVID on vulnerable women and girls
- Youth are part of the leadership structure, but we must seek young people's input in how youth envision their voices

Economic Justice and Rights

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Ensure young meaningful engagement at all levels including on macro planning and budgeting.
- Recognise that gender includes non-binary groups and take an intersectional approach.
- Prioritise the issue of unpaid care work and the need to recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid household work.
- Support youth-led social entrepreneurship and small business owners e.g. have microgrants that young people can access.
- Recognise and work on the intersection of GBV and economic empowerment. For example, how can young women and girls become economically empowered?
- Provide lay, free, universal and quality education, including civic education, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and digital skills.
- Recognise how poverty and food insecurity drives young people to join armed groups.
- Ensure equal access to land and opportunities, particularly for indigenous young women.
- Recognise the effects of the pandemic on economic justice. Make sure to disaggregate data by gender, sexual orientation, ethnic groups, location (urban/rural) and age, and fund research centres.
- Provide support to girls and young people on entrepreneurship, digital skills and financial literacy.
- Recognise intersection between sexual rights and economic rights.

- Tackle harmful gendered norms on girls' and women's 'role' in society.

QUOTES FROM DIALOGUES

- *"I never see young people in financial and budget meetings. Young people's involvement should be prioritized in all levels - macro-decisions such as financial inclusion and economic planning".* Young woman / girl, country unknown
- *"AC Leaders should address cross-cutting issues on financing, intersectional discrimination and structural inequalities."* Young woman / girl, country unknown
- *"Small businesses run by young women have been completely shut down, they are unable to access funding from banks and face increasing restrictions in accessing money. For most of us young women in my community there is a large percentage of women who are domestic workers. They face issues of unpaid care work and job insecurity, underpaying domestic workers at this time really impacts their family".* Young woman, Kenya
- *"I'm glad there are youth-led organisations represented in the action coalitions, but you need to strengthen communication channels to youth groups on the ground to feed into leadership what is happening at local level".* Young woman / girl, country unknown

What are Action Coalition leaders saying?

- As a group we are still defining what we want to focus on. We are still deciding how we want to engage young women; the next Action Coalition call we have an agenda item on how to engage youth
- CARE: I want to see youth and women's rights organisations participating in processes and contributing to decision making.
- CARE: We want to advance issues around financial inclusion, young women and girls and domestic work and women's entrepreneurship. The issues we are looking at echoes what you are saying – domestic work and household work and the government putting in social protection measures to protect those women. Your examples are good evidence.
- Agreed, it is important to involve young people in macro decisions around budgets and planning. I like that you highlighted the communication channels to young people. There are different channels you can participate in, through the Youth Task Force and engaging with Action Coalition leaders directly, we are open for feedback!

Feminist Action for Climate Justice

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Education is a priority! And any education efforts must reach rural areas. Educate girls and young women on climate change and how it is affecting us.
- Recognise that social justice and climate justice are interlinked, social crises and climate crises are interlinked.
- Recognise that climate change is gendered. Men and women, boys and girls are affected differently.
- The movement for climate justice needs to be linked to other movements such as indigenous people's movement to defend their lands, territories and natural resources.

- We should use our power to build connections between the local and the international level, bringing local experiences to the table.
- It is important to have more balance between the international solutions and the local best practices.
- We should link the work of human rights defenders and other topics with the work that climate justice activists are doing.
- Ensure integral protection for climate justice activists, many of them are youth and are being criminalized and prosecuted.
- Make sure girls and women are at the decision-making table in climate justice and movements.
- AC leaders to keep priorities on the law, especially those on the front lines. Laws that are helping and protecting women and girls.

QUOTES FROM THE DIALOGUES

- *“Information stays in the capital, and there are a lot of young women not getting information at all. Climate education should be considered a priority. Social crises are connected to the climate crisis; the most vulnerable people will feel the consequences of the climate crisis hardest.”* Young woman, Chile
- *“Most females aren’t participating in climate change justice. Women need more opportunities within these spaces that are inherently held by men.”* Girl / young woman, country unknown
- *“Climate is linked to other fights from the indigenous community. Don’t assume that this doesn’t have a connection to other issues- we must use power to build connections between the local and the international. We should link the work of human rights defenders with that of climate change defenders. We need to understand how the climate crisis is ending life in the communities, and affecting not only people, but the land and water. These things are often the consequences of economic projects. And we must recognize the differentiated impacts on women and men.”* Girl / young woman, country unknown

What are Action Coalition leaders saying?

- Costa Rica has a longstanding commitment to gender equality. The country has committed to actively contribute to the Generation Equality Forum too.
- Economic, political, and health autonomy are key; but climate action encompasses all three of them. Costa Rica has been combating climate change and the erosion of the environment. The creation of national parks is one way we have protected the environment. This requires a gender lens because women are mostly at the forefront of environmental conservation. There is evidence that shows women’s action is impactful in protecting the environment.
- Civil society participation is key for Generation Equality.
- The Action Coalition is co-led by many stakeholders: from just Costa Rica, this includes the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Environment, and Social Sciences faculty.
- The environment is a human right discussion. The Coalition wants to merge these elements.
- The plans to engage girls: on Oct 1, the Action Coalitions are aiming to present the first plan, and there are still some actions that we need to take. We need to talk about education when we’re talking about the conservation of the

environment, and the emphasis is on the next generation. This is still in the design phase.

- We need to bring the local experiences to the table and acknowledge their relevance. We sometimes want to solve things without being grounded, and we need more balance of voices at the table.

Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Recognise that ICT is vital for more employment opportunities. This includes STEM scholarships for women and schools need to be equipped with technology and the internet, including those in rural areas. Girls need role models of women who work in STEM!
- Provide equal access to the internet and to devices. It's not equal and this is not fair.
- Tap into local groups to make solutions more sustainable! Girls in rural areas want to participate but do not have the means to do it. Communities of solidarity online and on social media have been hugely important — giving girls and women an opportunity to speak about issues that normally are ignored.
- Recognise that girls and young people use technology to connect with others, to organise and take collective action with them.
- Ensure safe access to the internet. Girls and young people have to be online, but they face harassment, violence and sexual harassment when they do it. Work in partnerships with Ministries of ICT and social media companies to develop stronger reporting mechanisms that hold perpetrators accountable.
- Recognise the many traditional stereotypes which are a barrier for girls engaging in technology – computers are for boys; housework is for girls.
- Advocate for the safe and transparent use of data and surveillance by governments and tech companies so that information is not used against girl and youth activists.

QUOTES FROM THE DIALOGUES

- “I want a community without trolls, I want the information that I get access to be accurate and uplifting, I want to communicate with friends from across the world.” Girl / young woman, country unknown
- Ensure “that the information is not used against us and our movements, and yes for our benefit.” Girl / young woman, country unknown
- “Teaching is mostly via paper, the schools are not equipped with projectors and laptops”. Girl/ young woman, Philippines
- “When we experience sexual harassment online – I do not know what policies or mechanism are in place to address this.” Girl / young woman, country unknown

Feminist Movements and Leadership

What do we want you to prioritise?

- Civic education is vital as a foundation for building critical consciousness.
- Recognise the tensions between movements and generations, create space for dialogue and collaboration.
- Make the Generation Equality and Action Coalition processes easier to access and understand.
- Provide funding and non-financial support to girl, grassroots initiatives, and young feminist movements.
- Recognise the diversity of girl and youth activism and the different challenges facing adolescent girls, girls with disabilities, those with HIV, girls from rural areas, refugee girls and young women, indigenous and afro descendant girls, lbtqi community, etc.
- The need for inter- generational dialogues between feminists and upcoming feminists.
- Create spaces where people can have conversations about feminism and feminist movements.
- Youth are worried about criminalization, prosecution and murder of human rights defenders, we need to also talk about women, peace and security.

QUOTES FROM THE DIALOGUES

- *“We as young people, feel like we are being talked at and not talked with. We need to be on the forefront of these conversations. In meetings we are there so the host can take pictures of us and say that they are involving youth. Millennials and the older generation do not give us space to talk about our passion and share our own truths. We need you to trust us when we share our opinions and talk about our passions, we have innovative ideas.”* Girl / young woman, country unknown
- *“Unaccompanied girls and refugees are not listened to; they need access to platforms so they can speak. They need to know what platforms exist and the mechanism to link migrants and refugees with platforms. We combine advocacy with practical activities, we can organise workshops with AC leaders and girls.”* Girl / young woman, country unknown

What are Action Coalition leaders saying?

- Young Feminists Europe: We need to ensure we don't just talk about young girls and feminists but have them in leadership and shape the space. We are going to create inclusive spaces. We work in virtual teams and methodologies. We need to create different rules to break hierarchies. We want to bring all youth leaders on an online platform and create a working group
- OHCHR: Our AC is still creating the vision statement so it's great to have this conversation now. Would like to see women and girls in all diversity and express rights and more feminist foreign policies

Action Coalitions leaders who joined the calls: Care International, Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Outright Action International, Breakthrough, United Kingdom Government, Government of Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark, Government of Mexico, Government of Costa Rica, Fundación para Estudio e

Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM), Young Feminist Europe, The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Consortium of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Global Fund for Women, Women at the table part of A+ Alliance, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Global Affairs Canada, Youth and Children Commission of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women from the Americas, Red Las Niñas Lideran, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

The Generation Equality Youth Taskforce, Plan International, Women Deliver, Girls Not Brides (GNBs), Malala Fund, Save the Children and, She Decides thank the adolescent girls, young people and AC leaders who joined the call in addition to Irish Aid as a champions of the adolescent girls agenda in Generation Equality.

***“We are powerful, we can do anything we put our mind to.
Greatness is not bound by age”***