



ADOLESCENT GIRLS AT THE CENTRE

GENERATION EQUALITY ACTION COALITION PRIORITIES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Introduction: Why do we need to put Adolescent Girls at the Centre of the Action Coalition blueprints and the Generation Equality movement?

Adolescence is a critical period of great transition for girls. It is a unique window when life changing events happen and offers a distinct opportunity to break cycles of poverty and deprivation.

However, for girls in the global South, early adolescence (10-14) is typically a period where their worlds shrink and opportunities are curtailed due to norms and expectations of their social environments – their mobility becomes limited to protect their sexual ‘purity’ and family honour, they take on care and domestic work, drop out of school, abandon their friendships and networks, and may become married. The double discrimination they face due to their gender and age is compounded by poverty and other factors of discrimination such as disability, sexual identity or ethnicity. Often, they enter adulthood already at a severe disadvantage as a result of violence, early pregnancy, child marriage and limited opportunities for education and employment.

Adolescence also offers a unique opportunity to reap a triple dividend for adolescent girls now, for their adult trajectories, and for their children’s futures. The benefits of investing in adolescent girls’ healthy, safe and successful transition to adulthood have a positive impact on wider society over the long term, and on the overall achievement of gender equality.ⁱ

However, the global crisis brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak is significantly impacting the environment in which adolescent girls grow and develop. Adolescent girls are particularly affected by the socio-economic impacts of the outbreak due to harmful social norms and the double discrimination they face. As families, communities and the economy face extreme stress and pressure, adolescent girls are at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation and abuse, child early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU), unplanned pregnancy, and increasing domestic care responsibilities. Measures to curb the disease have worsened existing inequalities with school closures that will disproportionately affect adolescent girls who faced gender and age specific barriers to their education pre-COVID-19, and are at the highest risk of dropping out, while cutting them off from essential health and protection services and social networks. This pandemic has the potential to derail and reverse the tenuous gains made towards advancing the rights of girls if their unique vulnerabilities are not addressed head-on in the global response to COVID-19 and in the post-COVID ‘new normal’. We must not risk adolescent girls continuing to fall between the cracks and be rendered invisible in emergency response and recovery plans, policies, programmes and budgets, where these are targeted either towards women (and ignore age-related factors) or children (and are gender-blind).

Adolescent girls living in forced displacement or conflict-affected contexts face exacerbated risks and increased needs as the COVID-19 crisis intersects with already weakened, inaccessible and sometimes non-existent WASH, health, education and protection services. They are already more likely than other girls to be out of schoolⁱⁱ, unaccompanied or separated from their families or care-givers, and may even be caring for other children in girl-headed households, with less access to information and services than adult-headed households.

We have therefore identified concrete adolescent girl centred actions for each of the Action Coalitions, centred on their unique risks and priority needs in the current COVID-19 context and in the world beyond. Collectively this adds-up to a framework of actions across the six Action Coalitions - Gender Based Violence; Economic Justice and Rights; Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Feminist Action for Climate Justice; Technology and Innovation and Feminist Movements and Leadership - which protect and promote the rights of adolescent girls and advance gender equality.

ACTION COALITION ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Rationale for focusing on Adolescent Girls

Adolescence is a crucial time for girls. Yet as they reach this time in their lives, girls are at increased risk of experiencing all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual, physical, and psychological violence. Globally, millions of girls and young women are subject to violence. Almost 1 in 3 girls aged 15-19 have experienced intimate partner violenceⁱⁱⁱ, girls make up 1 in 4 victims of trafficking^{iv}, and it is projected that 68 million girls will undergo FGM between 2015 and 2030.^v The most marginalized girls and young women are most at risk of high rates of violence during childhood, as gender intersects with other forms of marginalization such as race, poverty, gender identity, sexuality, and disability. This then drives a continuum of violence, as girls who witness or experience violence in childhood are more likely to experience intimate partner violence in adulthood.^{vi}



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Gender-based violence (GBV) has lifelong consequences on girls' health and wellbeing and can lead to a range of negative outcomes, both immediately and longer term. It can also restrict their access to education, reduce their potential earnings, increase their risk of unintended pregnancy and prevent them from participating equally in political and public life. GBV is largely used to control girls' lives, particularly their sexuality, maintain gender inequalities and reinforce traditional gender roles and as such leads to girls' lives being restricted, limiting where they go and how they act, and having significant impacts on their mental and physical health.

Ending violence against girls and young women is not only a fundamental human right but is essential to achieve all of the ambitions laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Agenda 2030, particularly SDG 5 and 16.

The **COVID-19 outbreak is having devastating impacts on rates of gender-based violence^{vii}**, putting girls and women at increased risk of intimate partner violence, online abuse, sexual violence, leading to an increase in violence against children, particularly girls. Social isolation measures implemented by governments have resulted in huge increases in calls to domestic violence helplines, of demand for shelters and safe spaces, and of reports of domestic violence to the police.^{viii} As social structures and safety nets are upended and billions of people are confined to their homes, significant stress is placed on families, thereby exacerbating existing gender inequalities and causing a rise of violence within the home.

Access to vital prevention and response services is affected by the outbreak as girls and women are increasingly cut off from essential social networks and face barriers in accessing services such as safe spaces, helplines, police and justice services, and mental health and psychosocial support. Accessing sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion, emergency contraception, STI/HIV management becomes even more severely compromised. There is also evidence that, during public health emergencies, services are at risk of being withdrawn or diverted owing to measures to mitigate the spread of the outbreak, as well as lack of funding and limited resources.^{ix} Girls and women will also face greater demand and walk further distances to get water, putting them at heightened risk to GBV. **Prevention, mitigation, and response services must be deemed essential services and funded and prioritised throughout all stages of the COVID-19 response.**

Girls are also more likely to be disproportionately impacted by the long term impacts of the outbreak as the economic pressures caused by the outbreak combined with disruption to education increases their vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse.^x School closures often mean the end of girls' education and it is estimated that 10 million more secondary-school age girls could be out of school following the crisis.^{xi} Research shows that, following the Ebola crisis in West Africa, economic impacts and school closures contributed to a rise in exploitation of girls and young women in exchange for money, food or other necessities, increases in child, early and forced marriage, sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy.^{xii} Initial estimates suggest the COVID-19 outbreak will have disastrous consequences, with 13 million more child marriages taking place between 2020 and 2030 and 31 million additional cases of domestic violence in the first 6 months.^{xiii}

For girls and young women living in refugee camps or as internally displaced persons, the immediate health impacts as well as additional socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly devastating.^{xiv} The outbreak exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, increasing barriers in accessing health care, education systems and protected child-friendly environments and may reinforce negative coping mechanisms that lead to gender-based violence and impact on girls' mental health.

GBV Action 1- GBV and COVID-19: Adolescent girls live free from violence and are protected from the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak because prevention and response services are deemed essential and emphasised and prioritised in all policies, information and guidance at all stages of the COVID-19 response.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Adequate funding** for services preventing, mitigating, and responding to all forms of violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children, and **ensuring services are not withdrawn or diverted.**
- **Adaption of services to ensure continued accessibility and availability** to all girls and women. For example, allowing those experiencing violence to move to a different location during social isolation.^{xv} Services such as helplines, safe spaces, and mental health and psychosocial support should be adapted, including establishing or enhancing virtual spaces for girls and women and utilizing ICT technologies.
- **Information on COVID-19 prevention and care developed in simple and accessible language and formats**, including specific information for girls and women for GBV support mechanisms. This information should be disseminated through channels most used by women and girls, such as radio/TV/ICT messaging with appropriate timing for maximum reach.
- Ensuring **health providers are aware of the risks and health consequences of GBV**, and they are trained on providing first line support and referral pathways and oriented on the gender implications of COVID-19.^{xvi}
- Measures to **ensure survivors of violence are still able to access legal remedies**, including police and justice services.
- **Involving youth-led and girl-led grassroots organisations and LGBTQI+ networks** in the development of response frameworks.^{xvii}
- Ensuring the **global humanitarian architecture addresses the gendered implications of COVID- 19**, including through mainstreaming GBV prevention, mitigation, and response in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, as well as country and regional response plans, and **supporting the meaningful participation of women and girls, women's rights organizations and girl-led groups and networks**, in all stages of the COVID-19 response in humanitarian contexts.

- **Messages on engaging boys and men** should be integrated in social and behaviour change communication **for positive masculinities, GBV prevention, positive parenting, and gender equality.**
- Factoring in gender when schools resume in order to mitigate against long-term dropout. Governments should **collect gender-disaggregated data and work with schools to develop and implement action plans to re-enrol girls** in school.
- Governments supported in **collecting sex and age disaggregated data** for COVID-19 incidence, morbidity and mortality rates, as well as supporting governments to carry out **gender analysis of data and project learnings** for gender responsive action.

GBV Action 2 - End CEFMU by increased investment in comprehensive community-led and evidence-based responses for adolescent girls, particularly in humanitarian settings

Sub-theme (what): Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions

Globally, **approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday.**^{xviii} CEFMU leads, in many cases, to physical and sexual violence by partners, premature onset of sexual activity, coerced sexual intercourse or rape, and has a severe impact on the health and wellbeing of girls. Girls who marry before the age of 15 are on average almost 50% more likely to have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence than those married over 18,^{xix} and this has significant impact on their mental health, as well as their physical health.^{xx} Girls who marry before adulthood are also more likely to become pregnant and give birth before they are physically and emotionally ready to, less likely to be in education, and more likely to have an unmet need for contraception which limits their SRHR choices. Ending child marriage and supporting married girls is necessary to ensure all girls and young women grow up free from violence and have the agency to make decisions about their own lives. **The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to put millions more girls at risk of being married off by their families** as a strategy to cope with social and economic shocks, particularly in humanitarian settings.^{xxi}

To protect girls rights and ensure the ambitions of Agenda 2030 and the BPfA are achieved the **COVID-19 response and recovery must be informed by strong gender and age analysis, and include adolescent girl programming.**^{xxii} **Governments must pass laws to protect children from CEFMU and develop and implement costed national action plans on ending child marriage.** Governments must implement specific funded programmes to ensure GBV and child protection services explicitly identify the needs of married girls, and local government and governance structures must also be accountable for the delivery of action plans and the implementation of laws. It is essential that a coordinated, holistic approach is taken by governments and development actors when working to tackle CEFMU. This must ensure effective linkages between relevant sectors and focus on shifting harmful social and gender norms, recognizing these as the root causes of CEFMU.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Prioritise, fund and implement **gender-transformative approaches** which work to tackle harmful social norms and gender inequality as the root causes of CEFMU^{xxiii} and link these to social and economic policy measures, such as social protection to the poorest households, to prevent impoverished families turning to child marriage as a coping mechanism
 - Ensure multi-sectoral and multi-level approaches, including targeted activities at **the individual, family/community and institutional levels**
 - Engage men and boys, traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, and communities, and foster intergenerational dialogue, including through remote technology and adapted approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Driving evidence-based solutions** – GAGE has identified the following data gaps in driving forward effective interventions on CEFMU^{xxiv}:

- Existing tools aimed at CEFMU have almost entirely ignored services, such as education services or programme providers, and the ways in which they can prevent CEFMU as well as improve the lives of those who are, or have been, married
- There is a need for robust mixed-methods research that focuses on marriage decision-makers, by asking what might encourage them to make different decisions
- Threats and opportunities that girls and boys face at various steps along the child marriage pathway must also be traced, and exploring how a range of services might improve outcomes
- **Comprehensive data collection** – very little is known on rates of CEFMU in humanitarian settings and many aspects of CEFMU in these settings is understudied. These settings are unique in that the populations represent many different cultures and traditions related to marriage. Although there are pockets of good practice, data collection is not being undertaken in humanitarian settings on a large-scale.^{xxv} As the prevalence data from CEFMU comes primarily from the DHS and MICS, it mostly reflects periods of stability. Given that practices around CEFMU in humanitarian settings are likely localized and experience greater variation over time than in stable settings, the existing data is insufficient for providing more contextual information, identifying drivers and establishing shorter term temporal trends.
- **Promote and fund interventions which support girls' access to safe education and transition into the workforce** – there is clear evidence to show that, if all girls were to complete primary and secondary education, there would be a drastic reduction in CEFMU rates.^{xxvi}
- Focus on humanitarian settings as this is where CEFMU is accelerating, and would also address a gap in the SDGs which do not have indicators in fragile settings

GBV Action 3 – End school-related gender-based violence by harnessing the transformative potential of education to shift harmful norms and investing in safe learning environments (Education action)

Sub theme (what): School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)

In the Covid-19 recovery environment where schools re-open and children are able to return, SRGBV is likely to remain a significant barrier to girls' education. This is rooted in gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms, many of which are learned at school. It can take many forms, including sexual, physical or psychological violence, and can be perpetrated by both children and adults in and around school. **Over 115 million children globally experience SRGBV every year and new research has found attending school can increase students' risk of experiencing violence and negatively impacts learning outcomes.**^{xxvii} In some countries, girls who attend school are three times more likely to experience multiple forms of violence, (including sexual violence, transactional violence, online violence, and exploitation), than those who do not.^{xxviii} This has a significant negative impact on both learning outcomes, access to education and creates a cycle of gender and educational inequality.

As with all forms of violence, the most marginalized children are most likely to experience high rates of SRGBV. In particular, socio-economically disadvantaged girls and those attending schools in poorly resourced areas, conflict zones, areas affected by crisis or climate change, or refugee camps are considered most vulnerable. Girls and young women are often specifically targeted in attacks on education in conflict through attacks that are aimed at repressing the learning and teaching of girls and young women.^{xxix} Due to school closures, the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred an unprecedented and massive global scale-up of eLearning for out-of-school children and adolescents, including many children who have little prior experience with the internet. Children spending more

time online means being exposed to protection risks on the internet, including GBV, child sexual exploitation, and abuse.

Girls' access to and participation in safe and inclusive learning environments must be prioritized by funding and implementing interventions which strengthen the education system and tackle gender inequality and harmful gender norms as the root causes of SRGBV. National governments must adopt comprehensive and multi-sectoral gender-responsive plans to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in and around schools, including new remote learning opportunities, integrated into their education sector plans. These must work to shift harmful social and gender norms and address attitudes and behaviour that supports or legitimises violence.

Schools are a crucial environment for tackling harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality, provide critical peer support networks, and are a key entry point for other essential service delivery, including protection and health services and information. The transformative potential of education must be harnessed when developing policies and legislation on eliminating SRGBV and GBV in other spaces, such as within the home and community.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Ensure governments, ministries of education, and humanitarian and development actors **recognize that all forms of violence in and around school are affected by harmful gender norms** and unequal power dynamics
- **Ensure that SRGBV is addressed across all parts of the education system and budgets^{xxx}**
 - Policy and legislation that safeguards children's rights
 - Improved curriculum based approaches and teacher training to prevent SRGBV^{xxxi}
 - Reporting and response mechanisms, including codes of conduct for teachers and other personnel
 - Child safeguarding measures and GBV prevention and mitigation is integrated in all remote and digital learning options
- **Measure and monitor nature and prevalence of SRGBV at national level by:**
 - Including schools as sites in multi-country studies on adolescent gender norms, violence against women and girls, and violence in childhood
 - Add questions on gender norms and why different forms of violence occur in existing school-based surveys (e.g. GSHS, PIRLS, TIMSS, and TERCE/SERCE)
 - Strengthen EMIS systems to collect data on incidents reported and addressed at school (disaggregated by sex, age, disability etc) to enable countries to track progress on policy implementation
- **Strengthen documented evidence of programmes that effectively prevent SRGBV in a holistic way by:**
 - Investing in studies on the impact of interventions that apply gender analysis in preventing violence in schools
 - Documenting the impact and effectiveness of interventions that address the root causes of violence in schools and apply a whole school approach
- **Support children and young people to enable them to recognize violence, understand their right to be free from violence, speak up, seek support and know where to get help, and lead in efforts to prevent and respond to SRGBV**
- **SRGBV should be systematically part of the implementation plans of the Safe Schools Declaration^{xxxii}**
- **Ensure gender-based violence prevention, mitigation and response efforts are integrated through education interventions in humanitarian settings, including fragile or conflict-affected settings and forced displacement contexts.**

ACTION COALITION ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

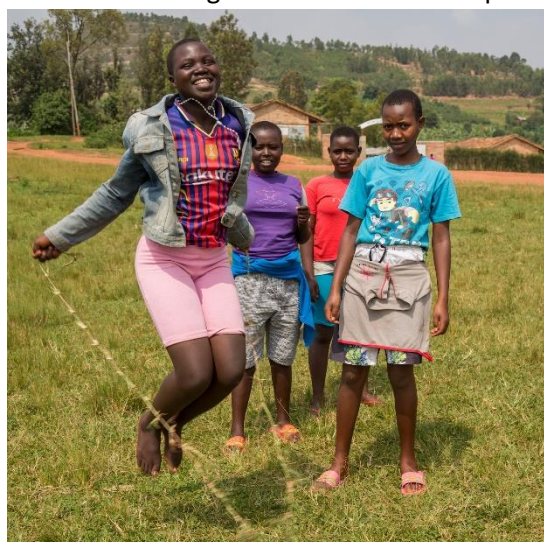
Rationale for focusing on adolescent girls

Adolescence is a critical period of great transition in the economic life of girls and young women. For girls in the global South, early adolescence (10-14) is typically a period where their world shrinks and opportunities are curtailed due to norms and expectations of their social environments – upon reaching puberty, their mobility becomes limited by parents' concerns for their safety and family honour, they take on care and domestic work, drop out of school, lose their friendships and networks, and may become married (sometimes in exchange for money or goods) and have their first child. Girls begin to both internalize lower aspirations impinged on them, and lack the voice to address the social norms in their environment that dictate their adult trajectory.

Adolescent girls and young women (15-19) in the global South also face restrictions to their economic empowerment due to the reality that in most low-income countries they have fewer and gendered options than their male peers for decent paid work or access to finances and credit to start their own businesses. They face particular disadvantage in labour and enterprise markets due to lower numeracy and literacy levels, limited skill training and in lower value sectors, lack of access to capital, and limits to their movement and market interactions due to fears for their physical safety and threats of sexual abuse in work places. Many are excluded from labour markets due to limits of expectation and permission to work 'outside the home'. Moreover, pressures related to unpaid, domestic and care work burdens contribute to limiting girls' possibilities in ways that often have lifelong consequences. They lack control over their sexual and reproductive health and access to SRHR and general health services, and this is complicated further by social norms silencing their voice and agency in household decisions directly affecting them.

The double discrimination faced by adolescent girls and young women due to their gender and age is compounded by poverty and discrimination based on class, race/caste or ethnicity, refugee status and disability. Gender discrimination not only restricts adolescent girls' and young women's abilities to aspire, accumulate human, social and productive assets, limiting future educational and employment opportunities, but also hinders their well-being and diminishes their self-belief. Being more reliant on household income generated by male heads of households and having less role in household decision-making, while providing the bulk of the unpaid care and domestic work, means that adolescent girls' and young women's needs often go unmet.

Upholding the Agenda 2030 pledge to 'leave no one behind' will require social protection programme design and implementation informed by an understanding of life course, gender and other intersecting vulnerabilities. Social protection is central to multiple SDGs impacting adolescent girls, especially goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10.



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The COVID-19 crisis is triggering a massive economic crisis as the result of national lockdowns, closures of markets and physical distancing measures, pushing at least a half a billion people into poverty. This will have a profound effect on girls and women, with far greater effects on those who are already engaged in informal, unprotected, precarious and unpaid work or self-employment.

Cross-country evidence analysing gendered dimensions of both the Ebola and Zika outbreaks found women and girls experiencing greater economic deprivation and limited access to resources.^{xxxiii} Household economic instability caused

by COVID-19 is forecasted to lead to negative coping mechanisms including child marriage in some contexts^{xxxiv}. We know that school closures, if prolonged, disproportionately disrupt girls' education^{xxxv} and dropping out of school limits girls' access to 21st century skills and knowledge, further limiting successful economic participation in adulthood.

Predictions signal that the COVID-19 response and recovery will be inequitable and girls will bear disproportionate domestic care roles, suffer marginalization from response services due to gender divides, face risks of being dispossessed from assets, are less likely to return to education, and will face lasting disruption to their economic opportunity.^{xxxvi}

Economic Justice Action: Stop adolescent girls and young women being left behind in the 21st Century economy and ensure they have access to decent work with a targeted social protection and education initiative that supports legal frameworks guaranteeing twelve years of free and compulsory basic education, complemented by measures to enable adolescent girls to transition to decent work.

Sub theme (what)

An education and social protection package in thirty countries (including fragile contexts) over five years to avoid adolescent girls and young women being left behind. A combination of targeted, linked and age responsive education and social protection measures are required to address the particular challenges faced by adolescent girls and young women in achieving economic justice over their life course. These measures will be all the more pertinent as adolescent girls emerge from COVID-19 response and recovery phases and require practical support to improve their chances of returning to school and transition to decent work. Some additional safety net measures targeting adolescent girls and young women during the COVID-19 economic crisis period are also necessary to ensure that they are not left behind.^{xxxvii}

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Transformative change will require **an integrated cash-plus approach** (eg cash transfers that can be used only for girls' school fees) that **integrates addressing social norms** (eg parents attitudes to girls' and secondary education, non-stereotyped market based vocational education), working in tandem with other interventions and focusing directly on adolescents' age- and gender-related needs.
- **Social protection mechanisms** targeting this age group must be designed to **strengthen adolescent girls' personal, social and economic assets** so that they are able to achieve economic justice and rights, not only during this life stage, but also **promoting graduation to a successful adult economic trajectory**.
- **Robust, mixed methods and longitudinal research** to better understand the outcomes and to test for unintended consequences (e.g. more educated adolescent girls can be deemed more attractive for forced marriage).
- Linked to measures to **ensure access to twelve years of quality, free, compulsory education** (primary and junior secondary), or informal education provision (inclusive of costs), focusing on numeracy, literacy, life skills and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for girls of secondary school age who cannot access formal education. Secondary education has been found to have cascading impacts on outcomes, including not only economic empowerment but also child marriage, lifetime fertility, mental health, and household and community decision-making^{xxxviii}.
- Equally vocational skills must move beyond a minimalist focus on technical skills to embrace a more holistic paradigm including technical skills, soft skills and awareness of gender equality.^{xxxix}
- **Social protection mechanisms** towards older adolescents (15-19 years) must be designed to directly counter their real and opportunity cost of continuing secondary education or

attending quality vocational skills training. Older adolescents are often already mothers, or are seeking to establish their own household and paid work life. Including older adolescents in targeted safety nets mechanisms to minimise asset depletion is essential for them to succeed beyond seasonal and unexpected shocks. A cash-plus approach would also link them to informal savings groups to prepare for inclusion in financial services.^{xi}

COVID-19 specific social protection measures to address and mitigate risks to adolescent girls' economic empowerment will entail:

- **Expand age-and gender-responsive social protection packages and shock responses** that consider the specific constraints faced by adolescent girls stemming from **increased care roles, greater risks of permanent school drop-out, and disproportionate roles in informal sectors, and ensure household economic resilience** to prevent negative coping mechanisms which adversely affect girls. This should include cash transfers directed at adolescent girls and young women in households, for preparedness for COVID-19 isolation, costs for transportation to clinics and other contingencies.
- **To mitigate risks associated with cash transfers, broader community awareness through social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) is necessary, as part of cash-plus approaches** integrating payments with social norms interventions and soft skills training in the medium-term. The value of such cash transfers should be established by recommended Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) value and coordinated with governments and other agencies to ensure consistency and avoid negative social consequences
- Coupled with this, there is a need to invest in **real-time research to fully grasp the inequitable losses affecting adolescent girls in both the immediate and medium terms**. By rendering visible the invisible burdens on adolescent girls, and the **different impacts on younger and older adolescents (10-14 and 15-19)**, we can assess disproportionate implications on adolescent girls' economic well-being during this period of great transition, and design interventions accordingly.

Examples of existing intervention in this area:

There is increasing evidence that programmes that take a cash-plus approach have significant scope to shift the norms that limit adolescent girls' lives more generally.^{xli} For example, the Adolescent Girls' Initiative in Kenya is a randomised control trial involving 6,000 girls between 11 and 15 years of age. The programme compares the effects of multisectoral intervention packages across four arms: (1) violence prevention only; (2) violence plus education (cash and in-kind support conditioned on girls' school attendance); (3) violence plus education plus health (weekly safe space meetings covering health and life skills); and (4) violence plus education plus health plus wealth (financial education and savings opportunities). Midline results, which captured impacts immediately after the intervention ended, were positive, including improved household wealth, a reduction in girls' exposure to violence and improved financial literacy, and for urban girls improved secondary school transitions, knowledge about SRH, help-seeking and self-efficacy.

More robust and longitudinal studies are needed to understand exactly what types of social protection programmes work to promote adolescent well-being. Research is needed to understand the relative impacts of unconditional cash transfers versus those that are conditional or labelled and the likelihood of benefits reaching the girl when paid through the parent, and to understand how to best mitigate for unintended consequences. Such a research component has to be written into each intervention.



ACTION COALITION ON BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

Rationale for focusing on Adolescent Girls

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action falls during a challenging political environment, where sexual and reproductive health and rights are increasingly under attack, most clearly as a result of shifts in US policy on SRHR. Adolescent girls are suffering the most from these regressive, conservative policies, with their lives and futures placed increasingly at risk.

Adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by and vulnerable to SRHR violations due to entrenched gender inequalities and age discrimination, compounded by the lower value attributed to girls in many societies. Harmful social norms, gender stereotypes, power imbalances between males and females, perceptions of adolescent girls' sexuality and other inequalities are significant barriers in restricting adolescent girls' access to SRHR. Lack of information about their bodies, sex and relationships and of SRHR services to meet their needs further compounds the discrimination they face. Evidence has shown that in some regions of the world, only 40% of young people have adequate knowledge about HIV and 66% of girls on average know nothing about menstruation until menarche^{xlii}.

Adolescent girls often lack the voice, agency and autonomy to make their own decisions in relation to their sexual and reproductive health and are frequently denied access to quality sexual and reproductive health information and services. This can leave them vulnerable and unable to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), as well as from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Complications due to pregnancy or childbirth is the leading cause of death for adolescent girls aged 15-19 globally, three in five preventable maternal deaths occur in settings of conflict, displacement and disaster and around 23 million girls and young women aged 15-19 have experienced an unmet need for modern contraception, facing the possibility of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion. Adolescent girls are also frequently subjected to sexual violence and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child, early and forced marriage and unions. HIV

acquisition rates among adolescent girls and young women are also on the increase with gender inequality and intimate partner violence preventing many girls and women from protecting themselves against HIV. Adolescent girls and young women are twice as likely to be living with HIV as young men of the same age, of all HIV infections occurring among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, 80% are in girls aged 15–19 years^{xliii}.

Harmful social and gender norms often glorify sexual purity and marriage, motherhood and fertility in a manner that limits adolescent girls' autonomy in exercising life choices and often curtails their educational and work opportunities. Girls may be valued according to their marriageability or their ability to produce children. This often results in families seeking to marry their daughters early and puts pressure on girls to become pregnant soon after they have entered into marriage, regardless of their young age and before they may be physically or emotionally ready to give birth. This pressure to reproduce quickly – and in some contexts to favour having male children – can lead to significant adverse mental and physical health consequences as a result of repeated pregnancies spaced too closely together.

Gender inequality can also affect access to and the quality of care, for example through prejudicial attitudes to girls and women. Service providers may refuse to provide girls with access to contraceptive information and services or impose conditions such as spousal, parental or guardian consent. These restrictions may also be embedded within laws and policies too. In addition, social norms and taboos around sex and sexuality restrict them from gaining and practising skills, such as negotiation skills, required to exercise agency in these matters.

Evidence^{xliv} increasingly points to serious mental health consequences for girls going through situations of violence and backlash. This is especially applicable when they express their sexuality, choice in romantic relationships and reject child, early or forced marriage^{xlv}. Risk factors for adolescents' mental health and linkages with their sexual and reproductive health have also been documented^{xlvi}. Severe restrictions on mobility due to fear of violence add further complexity to the kind of marginalization girls face as they transition into adolescence.

Many risks that adolescent girls face tend to multiply in humanitarian contexts^{xlvii}, in particular gender-based violence, including sexual violence and trafficking, child, early and forced marriage, as well as sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), unintended pregnancy, maternal morbidity and death. Pregnancy for adolescent girls is always life-threatening, and this danger is exacerbated in humanitarian settings where access to sexual and reproductive health information and services is particularly limited: an estimated 60% of preventable maternal deaths, 53% of under-five deaths, and 45% of neonatal deaths globally occur in humanitarian crises or fragile contexts.^{xlviii} In times of crisis, the structures, networks and systems that protect girls may be weakened or destroyed and access to SRHR information and services may also be hindered or limited, leaving girls more vulnerable to violations of their rights.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a real risk that girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights will be de-prioritised with stark consequences. UNFPA predicts that a 6-month Covid-19 lockdown could deny 47 million women access to modern contraceptives – leading to 7 million unintended pregnancies.^{xlix} This analysis does not acknowledge the potential needs and pregnancies of adolescent girls. Evidence from the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone showed a 75 per cent increase in maternal mortality in just 18 months. A sharp rise in the number of unassisted births and teenage pregnancies were among the reasons behind this. In some communities in Sierra Leone, teenage pregnancy rates increased by up to 65%.^l Evidence from past crises also suggests that the COVID-19 crisis is likely to lead to more cases of child, early and forced marriage as girls are married off to relieve the economic burden on their families. Parents falsely assume that girls will fare better in this scenario, yet the reality for most girls who marry as children is a future of violence, subjugation, isolation and limited economic opportunities. UNFPA estimates

an additional 13 million child marriages taking place that otherwise would not have occurred between 2020 and 2030.^{li} Adolescent pregnancy is both a driver and a consequence of child marriage- 90% of births to adolescent girls aged 15-19 occur within a marriage^{lii}. Access to comprehensive sexuality education is part of the curriculum in many countries and the closure of schools due to COVID-19 means that many young people will have no access to vital health information.

The impact of the pandemic on health systems will exacerbate these risks, such as large disruptions in supply chains for contraceptives, in part due to the closure of large manufacturers in Asia and the knock-on impact on shipping and regulatory approvals. For those living with HIV (many of whom are girls and young women), it will also be critical to **ensure the supply of antiretroviral medications**.^{liii} As health systems become overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases adolescent girls' access to critical SRHR services will become even more restricted. This will likely be further compounded when impoverished families make critical decisions about who receives healthcare, influenced by gender norms which convey male preference. Disruption to health systems, restrictions on movement, increased care responsibilities, missed appointments due to fear of contracting the virus, availability of clean water and adherence to hygiene measures, all make it harder to receive pre – and post-natal care and safe delivery, thus further increasing adolescent girls' risks during pregnancy and birth.

There is also the concern that more **conservative governments will seek to use the crisis to curtail hard-won sexual and reproductive rights, particularly by limiting access to safe abortion**. There have been attempts by Italy and some US states to delay abortions. In contrast, there have also been moves by other countries such as the UK and Ireland to relax requirements and permit telemedicine for abortion for the duration of the crisis. **Access to safe abortion is an essential medical service and must be available to all adolescent girls, including those in humanitarian contexts**. This is particularly important given girls' heightened risk of GBV, restricted access to and disruption of SRHR information, supplies and services.

The Beijing Platform for Action explicitly recognises the discrimination and health risks that adolescent girls face and the absence and/or inadequacy of the sexual and reproductive health information and services that exist for many adolescents.^{liv} However, 25 years on, the challenges identified in the Beijing Platform for Action remain and the actions taken to date fall short. Adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights are not only critical to achieving the Beijing Platform for Action but also to realising the International Conference on Population and Development's landmark Programme of Action, SDGs 3 and 5 as well as many other connected Global Goals related to education, economic empowerment and political empowerment. If we are to achieve gender equality and sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 world, we need renewed commitment and action to ensure that all adolescent girls' SRHR are fully realised.

SRHR Action 1 – Ensuring gender-responsive comprehensive sexuality education for all children both within schools and in out-of-school settings, including in emergencies and protracted crises

Sub theme (what): Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The provision of gender-responsive comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is key to promoting an understanding and awareness of SRHR and to developing the skills, knowledge, autonomy, confidence and ability to make free and informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, to enjoy fulfilling and healthy relationships and to protect themselves and their partners against ill health, violence and unwanted pregnancy. CSE intersects with the rights to education, health, participation and protection.

UN International Technical Guidance on sexuality education from UNESCO^{lv} states that topics and learning objectives in CSE should cover the following components: information; values, attitudes and social norms; interpersonal and relationship skills; and responsibility. These areas cover a wide range of topics that are relevant for successfully delivering CSE. This includes learning about relationships, gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence, sex, sexuality and SRHR.

Research shows that CSE does not lead to an earlier onset of sexual activity, but rather can delay the age of first sexual experience and can have a positive impact in terms of safer sexual practices^{lvi}. The International Conference on Population and Development recommended that information and services should be made available to adolescents to help them understand and enjoy their sexuality and to protect them from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and the subsequent risk of infertility. It also emphasised the importance of addressing gender inequality and educating young men to respect women's self-determination and to share responsibility with women in matters of sexuality and reproduction.

CSE has the ability not only to empower children, adolescents and young people to make informed, autonomous decisions regarding their SRHR and current and future relationships, but it can also be part of a holistic approach to challenging gender inequalities and preventing and responding to gender-based violence and discrimination. As such, it is a powerful tool in the realisation of SRHR and can trigger positive shifts in social norms which underpin violence against girls and women. Creating positive change in behaviours requires an approach that engages boys as much as girls to challenge dominant norms of masculinity, gender roles and stereotypes and to develop equality, safety, respect and responsibility in relationships. As such, it is essential for both boys and girls to receive gender-responsive comprehensive sexuality education.

In times of crisis, CSE is equally important, given increased risks of sexual violence, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, and the breakdown of traditional methods of support for children, adolescents and young people. However, schooling can be severely disrupted in a crisis, resulting in significant gaps and limitations in education.

This is currently the case in the COVID-19 crisis, where unprecedented numbers of children are being impacted by school closures – in May 2020 UNESCO estimates this to be over 90% of the world's student population^{lvii}. To ensure that vital sexual and reproductive health information continues to be available and accessible, it is critical that positive sexuality education forms part of the distance learning package that is developed for those who are currently not in school alongside other digital and media efforts to impart this information.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Governments and other service providers should ensure the provision of universal access to gender-responsive CSE for all children, adolescents and young people** (including LGBTIQ+ youth and those who are married or living with a disability), both in and out of school and in times of crisis. CSE should start in the pre-school years, with the content tailored to the evolving capacities of the child. Curricula should be revised and adapted to the lived needs of children and young people in their settings.
- In times such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, **where there are school closures, government education and health ministries should ensure comprehensive sexuality education is included in online and offline distance learning** measures, including information on how to access SRH information and services. This information should be developed in simple and accessible language and formats.
- Those conducting CSE should be trained and equipped with adequate resources to deliver CSE that is non-discriminatory, inclusive and accessible, non-judgmental, scientifically accurate, rights-based, gender-transformative and effective.

- **Non-formal CSE to reach out-of-school children** can also be delivered through diverse channels including community interventions, online & media programmes.
- **Information should be available not only to adolescents but also to parents, caregivers, traditional and religious leaders and other gatekeepers to enhance their understanding of topics covered in CSE** and to increase their support and understanding of the health risks associated with puberty. Structured Parenting programmes that engage adolescents as well as parents should explicitly address gender equality, SRHR, positive masculinity, and gender based- violence and seek to improve the parent-child relationship, the couple relationship and reduce violence against adolescents, including intimate partner violence.
- **Governments and donors should ensure adequate funding of formal and non-formal CSE.** The delivery of non-formal CSE should be sub-contracted to civil society organisations and other providers. Specific technical and financial support should be given to youth led organizations carrying non formal CSE work with peers and adolescent boys and girls.
- Community Health Workers and Committees sensitized and provided resources on the gendered implications of COVID-19, SRHR, CSE and other topics that they can disseminate to girls and women. Girls' and women's rights organizations supported on SRHR, GBV, WASH, and other interventions and advocacy.

When scaling up CSE the following best practice examples of CSE guidance could be used:

- UNESCO's International technical guidance: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>
- UNFPA's operational guidance: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/unfpa-operational-guidance-comprehensive-sexuality-education>
- Population Council and IPPF's 'It's All One Curriculum' <https://www.popcouncil.org/research/its-all-one-curriculum-guidelines-and-activities-for-a-unified-approach-to->
- WHO Standards for sexuality education in Europe: <https://www.bzga-whocc.de/en/publications/standards-in-sexuality-education/>

Examples of other evidence and programmes include:

- GAGE rigorous evidence reviews:
 - Marcus, R., Kruja, K. and Rivett, J. (2019) What are the impacts of parenting programmes on adolescents? A review of evidence from low and middle-income countries. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence
 - Marcus, R. (2018) Programming to promote gender-equitable masculinities among adolescent boys: key findings from a rigorous review. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence.
- Plan International work with governmental institutions (Ministry of Education and Health) other actors such as UNFPA, UNESCO and civil society to strengthen the provision of quality CSE in schools e.g. in Bangladesh, Laos, El Salvador, Togo and Honduras, and is pilot testing 12 CSE standards (adapted from the UNESCO International Technical Guidance) to be used in its programming work.
- IPPF's Get Up, Speak Out project <https://www.ippf.org/our-approach/programmes/get-speak-out-guso>
- IPPF Member Associations translate and contextualise AMAZE videos for their countries. The sexuality education videos cover a wide-range of topics and include lesson plans for educators and discussion topics for parents. <https://amaze.org/>

Who (to target):

- All school aged-children (ideally including pre-school through early childhood care and education)

- Children who are of school age but not in formal education including for reasons related to COVID-19 pandemic
- LGBTIQ+ children
- Families and communities of children in question
- Married girls and boys
- Migrants and refugees

Where (to focus):

- Countries with highest rates of adolescent maternal mortality
- Countries with highest rates of unmet need for contraception and safe abortion
- Countries with highest rates of CEFMU, adolescent pregnancy and FGM/C
- Countries with highest number of adolescents
- Crisis and humanitarian settings – eg Sahel
- Migrant and transit routes

SRHR Action 2 - Ensuring non-discriminatory access to SRHR services (including contraception and safe abortion) which are gender-responsive, rights-based, adolescent- and youth-responsive as an integral part of UHC core packages.

Sub theme (what): Adolescent and youth-responsive SRHR services

Financial, physical, social and cultural barriers, including harmful social norms, are hindering access to timely and quality health services. This inequity in access particularly affects the most vulnerable and excluded in society, including adolescents and young people. Major gaps with respect to adolescent- and youth-responsive health services include failure to ensure adequate privacy and accessible hours of operation, the prevalence of negative and judgmental attitudes among healthcare providers (particularly towards adolescent girls) and the request for parental or spousal consent. Social stigma is a major barrier that adolescents face in obtaining services. In many places, health providers will refuse to provide unmarried adolescents with contraceptive information and services because they do not approve of premarital sexual activity.

Weak infrastructure for health, communications and transport can make access to services in rural areas particularly difficult. Service providers may also fail to cater for the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people. Services are generally aimed at adults and may be viewed as inappropriate sources of care by adolescents and young people.

Among the services most needed by adolescents and young people are information about and access to male and female contraception; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS; understanding sexual orientation and gender identity and expression; menstrual hygiene management; maternal health services throughout pregnancy, delivery and postpartum; safe abortion and treatment for the complications of unsafe abortion, including post-abortion care; and prevention, timely detection and treatment of cancers of the female reproductive system. Survivors of sexual violence need access to quality clinical post-rape care, which includes post-exposure prophylaxis (within 72 hours) to minimise the chance of HIV transmission, emergency contraception, antibiotics to prevent sexually transmitted infections, broader medical care, as well as mental health and psychosocial support and legal support.

Continued efforts to improve the availability, accessibility, affordability and resilience of adequate services for all adolescents and young people – and adolescent girls in particular – are essential to enable them to realise their sexual and reproductive rights. Improving services would increase the likelihood that adolescents will use contraceptives and avoid unintended pregnancy as well as access vital information about other related areas of health, such as antenatal care, HIV and sexually transmitted infection

In times of crisis, it is vital to ensure the continued provision of SRH services as rates of sexual violence, adolescent pregnancy and child, early and forced marriage are known to increase. These services provide essential healthcare and must be prioritised as such. In **the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, there is a risk that SRH services are being de-prioritised** which could have devastating impacts for the health and lives of millions of adolescent girls around the world. Disruptions in the supply chain of contraceptives could have long-term impacts for those seeking to avoid unintended pregnancy. It is also critical to ensure that those who are living with HIV are able to access the antiretroviral they need. The stringency of lockdown measures in some parts of the world is also severely limiting the ability of adolescent girls to access SRH services, in some cases due to the closures of clinics themselves. There are also worrying moves by some more conservative states to delay abortion services, in disregard of the fact that they are a time-critical and essential health service.

For those girls who are pregnant or give birth during this time, there is increased risk to the health and lives of mother and baby. In addition to the challenge of attending ante-natal and post-natal appointments at this time amidst lockdown measures and social distancing requirements, the likelihood of many girls giving birth without the assistance of a health worker or midwife, significantly increases the risk of maternal and infant mortality. In addition, whilst the precise impact of the COVID-19 crisis on pregnant girls and women is not known as yet, WHO has warned that pregnant girls and women are amongst those who should take extra precautions.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Governments need to ensure equitable access to and adequate funding** of quality, affordable, gender-responsive, adolescent- and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services for all adolescents and young people, free of stigma, discrimination, violence or coercion and regardless of marital status.
- Such **services need to be responsive to the needs of adolescents** including those: from vulnerable and excluded groups such as migrants, ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, out-of-school; living with disabilities and identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning.
- **Services should be available and accessible to everyone** in accordance with the human rights principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and quality and regardless of age, marital status or location. They should also be provided in accordance with the evolving capacities of the person in question and free of any requirements for parental, spousal, guardian or judicial consent.
- **Services should also be provided in a non-judgmental, respectful way, guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality and be gender-responsive, rights-based** and linked with interventions to end violence against girls and women.
- **In crisis settings** (including the current COVID-19 pandemic), donors need to **prioritise the needs of adolescent girls and increase funding for SRHR programming**.
- **In crisis settings (including the current COVID-19 pandemic) Humanitarian response providers should also commit to the full and swift implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package** including awareness-raising about sexual and reproductive health services, and the earliest transition to comprehensive services and supplies based on a detailed needs assessment and longer-term programme planning. The Minimum Initial Service Package should also be strengthened to incorporate specific criteria on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
- Government authorities should work with health service providers at all levels and with community partners to **ensure that those living with HIV maintain uninterrupted access to antiretroviral treatment**.
- Governments and the private sector should also work together to ensure continuity in the supply chain **of contraceptives and SRH services**.

- **Governments should continue, and expand as needed to meet demand, support for hotlines** assisting people with questions about pregnancy, abortion, and sexual and reproductive health, and ensure that these services are accessible, assist and reach out to adolescent girls.
- **Governments should ensure safe abortion is regarded as essential health care** and accessible even when emergency measures mandate delaying some forms of health care.
- **Governments should facilitate full access to safe medical abortion at home**, including lifting any regulatory barriers to the teleconsultations and access to medications needed for medical abortion at home. There is strong evidence that this is safe and is especially necessary with the restrictions placed on movement due to COVID-19,^{lviii}
- **Governments should ensure pregnant adolescents can have a trusted companion present during childbirth**, and any restrictions required by public health concerns are implemented in the least restrictive way.
- Governments should take all necessary measures to **strengthen health systems and ensure that adolescent and youth responsive SRHR services are provided by trained health workers** and included as a core component of universal health coverage. They should ensure the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services closer to underserved areas, especially in rural, remote and impoverished urban areas.
- A **dedicated health budget for adolescent SRHR services** is also essential (with allocations and expenditure monitored) and user-fees and out-of-pocket payments for health services should be removed so that SRHR services are accessible and affordable to all adolescents and young people.
- **Governments should also ensure that national strategies and plans to address sexual and reproductive health issues employ a coordinated, multi-sector approach, including other relevant sectors** such as education, justice and child protection services to ensure that cross-cutting issues are addressed in a comprehensive way.
- **Strategies and programmes for implementing SRHR services should be developed in consultation with adolescents** and young people, particularly girls and young women, LGBTIQ+ and other marginalised groups. They should be meaningfully engaged in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as policy formulation. Women's rights organizations should be supported for GBV, SRHR, WASH, and other advocacy issues, including disseminating information, recommending services and direct advocacy with local and national decision-makers. Social networking, especially virtual social networks, should be created and supported to disseminate SRHR and other information to women and girls.
- Donors, Governments and civil society should establish and implement strategies to **increase digital and online access** to young people including marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Examples of good service provision:

- IPPF – Provide: Strengthening Youth-Friendly Services (<https://www.ippf.org/resource/provide-strengthening-youth-friendly-services>)
- IPPF: Keys to Youth-Friendly Services (https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/keys_introduction.pdf)
- IPPF: How to Move your organisation towards being youth-centred – (<https://www.ippf.org/resource/youth-centred-organization-introduction>)
- Plan International's work is primarily focused on three models: separate spaces for AYRHS, mainstreamed AYRHS and community-based services. We are supporting mobile outreach services in Togo and Guinea through mobile clinics, and Zambia and Malawi through community-based distribution agents. These agents are young peers that are trained and support health facilities in outreach to make services, particularly contraceptives more readily available and reduce distance for young people to access services. In Uganda, young girls and boys are linked to a toll-free, confidential telephone hotline for on-the-spot

counselling and referral services, provided by counsellors who have received training on offering youth-friendly advice. In many countries we also work closely with public health facilities to ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability, quality and non-discrimination in provision of SRHR information and services through capacity building and training of health workers.

Who (to target):

- 10-14 and 15-19 year old girls
- LGBTIQ+ adolescents and young people
- Migrants and refugees
- Girls at risk of or living with HIV
- Married girls and adolescents
- Unmarried girls and adolescents
- Pregnant girls and young mothers
- Husbands and partners

Where (to focus):

- Highest prevalence of adolescent unmet need for contraception and safe abortion
- Highest prevalence of adolescent maternal mortality and HIV
- Highest prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, CEFMU and FGM/C
- Crisis settings and transit and migrant routes.

ACTION COALITION ON FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Rationale for focusing on Adolescent Girls

Climate change is the greatest global, intergenerational equity issue of our time, impacting the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of every state, and the human rights of current and future generations. It has steadily eroded the resilience of societies while increasing exposure to extreme weather events and sea level rise. Many countries and communities are already suffering from impacts of extreme weather events such as loss of livelihood, increased malnutrition, increased levels of poverty, and associated negative coping strategies. If the COVID-19 virus also spreads to communities bearing the brunt of the climate crisis the impact could be devastating, for example Pacific islands or Southern Africa which are already facing increased typhoons or food crises. Climate crises will continue regardless of the COVID-19 crises, exacerbating the risks faced by adolescent girls, and it is **therefore vital to take a multi-risk approach in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**



Adolescent girls from marginalised communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change. The intersection of age and gender, alongside entrenched social and gender norms, and stigma increases their vulnerability. Climate change magnifies inequalities adolescent girls already suffer such as unequal access to health, sexual and reproductive health, education and participation and protection.

Many older adolescent girls and young women work in informal sectors in developing and lower middle-income economies. Those in rural areas are increasingly affected by climate change as they are highly reliant on the environment for livelihoods, particularly on agriculture (crop cultivation, fisheries, livestock). Women produce over half of the world's food, playing a key role in food security.^{lix} Their livelihoods directly depend on natural resources (rainfall, fodder, water), the availability of which is affected by climate change. The result is lower agriculture production, less income and prevention of accumulation of assets.

The impacts of climate change, such as increasing the frequency and intensity of rapid onset disasters or the long, slow erosion of land and livelihoods, and rising sea levels and acidification and increasing salinity of our oceans, exacerbate existing gender inequality. As families attempt to manage already stretched financial burdens due to reduced income and productivity from deteriorating livelihoods impacted by climate change, or respond to climate-induced/related disasters, adolescent girls are at greater risk of human rights abuses such as human trafficking, sexual violence, gender-based violence and exploitation and may engage in negative coping strategies such as child, early and forced marriage, selling of essential capital assets, or migrating to new and unfamiliar areas. This can result in the early onset of key life transitions, including early pregnancy and school dropout, directing girls into a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty, vulnerability, and marginalisation.

Climate Justice Action 1 - Equip adolescent girls with the skills needed to navigate the transition to a green economy through gender responsive climate change education with a focus on green skills, breaking down discriminatory social and gender norms that dictate career paths and division of labour, and advocating for equal access to green jobs, particularly in countries bearing the brunt of the climate crisis

Sub theme (what): Green Skills & Jobs – Gender Just Transition

The issues of energy and economic development are central to the climate debate. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change and limit global warming to 1.5oC, economic systems must become carbon-free and environmentally sustainable. Of particular importance to this debate is the growing concern for the 'just transition' - how the transition from our current fossil fuel dominated economy to a green future more sustainable economy should not leave anyone behind. Such a transition is an opportunity to advance gender equality. **The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to advance this agenda; when economies reopen they should do so in a way that progresses the aims of the Paris Agreement and supports the transition to a greener economy.** That is dependent on recognition of the need to deconstruct discriminatory gender and social norms, the important role of women and the need to equip girls and young women with skills and knowledge to navigate the transition. The recovery from the pandemic has the potential to propel the world to a more sustainable and inclusive path that tackles climate change, protects the environment, and ensures long-term health and security. A world centred on regeneration and care for people and planet, is the only sustainable future.

The very essence of a transition suggests systemic changes in society that have the potential to be transformative, especially in supporting gender transformative outcomes, decent work and regulations, changing metrics on the value and purpose of economic development to include multiple bottom lines, and improved skills. The just transition should also recognise and support the transition of girls from childhood to adulthood, especially when they start taking on responsibility for

their own household and livelihoods. Increased investment in and political support for resilience strengthening, risk reduction, preparedness and education in emergencies, is vital in supporting the continuous functioning of the education system to support the right to education. **Education is crucial in building knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed for adaptive capacity, engaging in and developing climate policies, supporting the green economy and encouraging individual environmental responsibility.** It is one of the most effective and cost-effective contributions to adapting to climate change and can support mitigation through improved life skills, green skills and more environmentally responsible decision-making. Girls' education correlates to country level increases in resilience and can enable a transition to a greener economy that is progressive, fairer and leaves no one behind. By investing in girls' education, countries are simultaneously investing in a just transition to a fairer world grounded in social, gender, intergenerational and ecological justice. The closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic and risk of girls not returning on their reopening thus greatly threatens this transition.

Any transition needs to **challenge the status quo of girls' and women's roles in domestic and care work and rethink the gendered division of labour.** Girls and women already do most of the world's unpaid care work. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), globally, women perform 76% of total hours of unpaid care work, more than three-times as much as men. The existing gender roles and responsibilities of girls and women as primary caregivers responsible for cleaning, cooking, water and energy collection and caring for children, elders, or the sick, are already impacted by the effects of climate change and will be further impacted as schools and childcare services close in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and as family members become ill. This will not only increase their existing burden of unpaid care work, but also expose them to contracting the virus. Child marriage often means adolescent girls become responsible for managing their own households from a young age, and thus will be forced to shoulder these unacceptable burdens. The pandemic has put in the spotlight the enormous contributions unpaid or low-paid female labour has in keeping societies running from informal work, nursing or in agriculture, whilst also subsidising the economy through hours of unpaid care work. The status quo must be challenged in the response to Covid-19 to support a just transition to a greener economy.

Improving girls' and young women's access to STEM, green skills, leadership skills and confidence to drive this agenda and ensure they are not left behind, can promote decent work for women, promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women. Strengthening girls' skillsets in a diverse range of activities offers them more choice when seeking employment, enabling them to engage with sustainable livelihoods, manage natural resources and reduce exposure to risks. These approaches can strengthen resilience, meeting immediate development needs while contributing to longer-term capacity development that will create a basis for reducing future vulnerabilities.

Renewable energy can have multiple benefits, especially in communities reliant on natural resources for their energy. Not only does renewable energy support sustainable development and climate mitigation, it can also be seen as an adaptation approach, especially for vulnerable communities. It can improve health of populations exposed to high pollution levels (often in urban areas of the Global South) and reduce poor cooking and heating practices; cut fresh water use; create jobs and develop new industries and skills; lower energy costs especially for the poor; and keep energy revenue local^{ix}, all of which can support economic development. In addition, renewable energy can contribute to achieving greater gender equality, given energy poverty most acutely impacts girls and women. Renewable energy supports girls' education by reducing time spent collecting fuel and water, and enabling school study in the evenings due to improved electricity provision. It also provides economic opportunities through green enterprises which can be managed by young women and by powering businesses beyond daylight hours, as well as improving girls' and women's safety due to improved lighting^{xi}. Supporting adolescent girls and young women to develop and manage green and renewable energy and technologies, and have ownership over land and agricultural practices, can strengthen

national mitigation and adaptation plans, provide new employment opportunities, and promote their empowerment^{lxii}.

HOW^{lxiii} To address these issues, we propose the following actions:

- **Addressing norms that dictate suitable roles** – working with adolescents, families, communities and local authorities to support in breaking down the gender stereotypes that dictate which roles girls and young women can take. Recognise the role of informal economies as those are the markets where most of the local entrepreneurship enter and where addressing gender norms could be perceived as closer to marginalized communities' daily life. This includes education, working together with boys and men, empowering girls and women, and advocating authorities and companies to develop non-discriminatory hiring policies, a safe and equal workplace for women and social protection schemes.
- **Investing in girls' education and including green skills and climate education in the curriculum and through non-formal education**– working with Ministries of Education, Environment and Labour/Employment to include green skills in the curriculum on for example what climate change is, the social and justice dimensions, skills needed for sustainable and diversified livelihoods (including agriculture), negotiation and decision making skills, politics. Curriculum changes are often slow, especially in reaching the most marginalized, and so there must also be knowledge and skills development through informal mechanisms. Supporting girls in their context to identify livelihood opportunities, how to make these climate-smart, sustainable and diversified and equipping them with the skills they will need to do this.
- **Advocating for policies and opportunities that offer equal opportunities for girls and young women in green jobs**
- **Providing equal opportunities and capital for adolescent girls and young women to access support and financing to engage in sustainably economic activities**, include starting micro/small-enterprises, improving agricultural inputs, and investing in opportunities to move up the green value chain, including in rural areas
- **Extending provision of adolescent friendly-gender responsive training and skills development** opportunities to ensure that girls have the knowledge and skills necessary to engage as equal actors in the economy.
- Recognizing the importance of already existing climate-friendly practices, especially in societies with traditional agricultural land use, seeing them as an opportunity to revalue them with innovative technology and addressing gender norms attached to them
- While much of this will be difficult to implement during the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change will continue to affect girls' rights. **Girls' voices and rights must be included in the economic response to the pandemic** to support a transformed greener economy, which is aligned with the Paris Agreement, and does not undermine it.

WHO

Marginalised adolescent girls, especially rural, the urban poor, indigenous peoples

WHERE

Countries and communities most affected by the climate crisis in the Global South

Climate Justice Action 2: Increase the meaningful engagement and leaderships of adolescent girls in climate policies and processes, including the design, implementation and monitoring of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans, through education, capacity building, accessibility, and breaking down existing structures, especially for marginalised girls in the Global South

Sub theme (what): Adolescent girls in climate change policies and processes

Prevailing gender norms and power relations often discriminate against girls and young women whose role is typically seen to be in the family rather than in the public sphere. This is exacerbated by discriminatory laws, policies and practices, a lack of women's political participation, low participation in public life more generally and requirements related to male guardianship that affect mobility. They often lack a distinct legal identity as a rights holder in the state and face climate policy makers hostile to girls' participation. The lack of ability of girls and young women to control their reproductive health and choices also serve as significant barriers to their rights, including participatory rights. Despite being the most affected due to these norms, women and children are severely underrepresented in climate policy processes. The interaction of age and gender vulnerabilities puts girls at particular risk of being overlooked. This means that many local or national policies do not adequately respond to the specific needs of girls. Further, climate empowerment and adaptation actions often focus on adult women rather than girls, neglecting the benefits of early learning and the pathway needed for girls to become future leaders.

A vital component to gender-balanced leadership and empowerment is equal access to quality information - that means information that is accurate, relevant, free from discriminatory stereotypes and in age and gender responsive language. However, climate information at all levels (climate scenarios, terminology, policies, early warning systems, financing, climate services) is often very technical and not accessible to girls or young women, meaning they do not receive the information required for adaptation and to hold leaders to account.

At a global and national level women and especially girls are significantly underrepresented, for example at the UNFCCC organised Conference of the Parties (COPs), women accounted for just 35% of all national Party delegates and around 26% of the Heads of Delegations in 2015. This clearly has huge implications on the extent to which global and national climate policies and decisions reflect gender, the realities of women and especially girls' rights.

Many global processes are also extremely exclusive and impenetrable with complex language, processes, application process, and inaccessible negotiations creating a further barrier for adolescent girls.

Strengthening girls' and women's voice and agency; ensuring their inclusion and equal participation and decision-making at community-level; supporting climate education; increasing access to age and gender responsive information; will all support in their empowerment. Tackling the root causes of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotyping and an unequal distribution of power underpins climate action. The main entry point for engagement will likely be at local, sub-national level policies, implementation and financial flow. Therefore, there needs to be concerted effort on systematising and enforcing guidance/checklists and approaches which encourage and support local and national girl-led advocacy (particularly for UNFCCC processes, under the Gender Action Plan).

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Include girls in the development, implementation and monitoring of NDCs and NAPs** – empower girls with the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in the NDC process through formal education and informal trainings. Work with local and national government, private sector and civil society to support and create spaces for girls in climate processes.

- **Capacity building** – focus on building the skills and knowledge to engage in climate-related spaces and navigate climate processes
- **Opportunities** - opening up opportunities at the sub-national/national/international level to ensure accountability and participation of adolescent girls
- **Accessibility** - Develop accessible climate frameworks, conferences and processes at all levels – (for example an age and gender responsive Paris Agreement (as done for the Sendai Framework)), support governments and the UNFCCC in making NDCs accessible to the public and especially those least likely to have access. Also need to consider travel, language, representation, opportunities etc.
- **Girls participation in climate processes at national and global level** – support governments in getting information and insight from adolescent girls in the lead up to national and global conferences or processes. Have a mandate for governments to have at least 2 adolescent girls in official delegations at national and global events related to climate change (including for example UNFCCC processes, UNGA, HLPF etc.)
- **Advocate within the system and outside the system for change** – work with governments, UN organisers etc. to change the system and make it more accessible. Support girls in changing the system that upholds the privileged few voices and ignores the disconnect between negotiations, what the science requires and what the people demand

Who and Where

- Adolescent girls predominantly from those countries bearing the brunt of the climate crisis, although some tactics are applicable adolescent girls from Global North and Global South

ACTION COALITION ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Rationale for focusing on Adolescent Girls

Technology can be a powerful tool for advancing gender equality and has the potential to empower adolescent girls economically and socially.^{lxiv} An essential component for adolescent girls to make informed life-altering decisions is having access to reliable, factual information and advice regarding issues such as sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and local and international laws about age of marriage. Technology provides vital access to information, services, social connection and life-changing opportunities such as education and employment. Technology can also act as an amplifier to the voices of



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adolescent girls, bringing together ideas and minds across borders and cultures. Online spaces, social media and digital tools enable adolescents to organize, spread inspirational stories, influence citizens and decision makers and galvanize global action for common causes, such as fighting against harmful gender stereotypes or standing up against gender-based violence. **Access to technology and internet is increasingly central to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights.**^{lxv}

Access to the internet varies hugely according to the development level of countries, the wealth and education of individuals, location (there is a strong urban-rural divide within countries) and gender:

fewer women than men use the internet^{lxvi}. Affordability, digital illiteracy, discrimination, entrenched social and gender norms and stigma are barriers for adolescent girls engaging in technology; from creating, accessing and using technology to pursuing technology-related studies or careers.^{lxvii} It is critical that adolescent girls have as much opportunity as men and boys to use and create technology, otherwise social and gender inequalities will only widen.^{lxviii}

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the impact of the digital gender divide. As a result of the global lockdown many aspects of society and services have shifted online. Access to the internet and technology are not ‘nice to haves’ but have become necessities in order to participate in society fully during the crisis, including accessing life-saving information, services and the labour market as well as maintaining social connectivity.^{lxix} COVID-19 lockdowns mean that adolescent girls are unable to access the internet at internet cafes, public Wi-Fi spots, schools or friends’ houses. At homes, access to the internet is often shared with boyfriends or family members, limiting accessibility for adolescent girls. With restricted or no access to the internet, adolescent girls are at risk of missing out on online education following school closures, suffer increased social exclusion, and they may not have access to reliable and relevant information about the pandemic.^{lxx} With the increase of GBV in lockdown, internet access is hugely important and can also be potentially lifesaving. Some governments are also now encouraging mobile money for goods and services in lieu of cash, to stem the contagion,^{lxxi} this results in those without access to technology unable to pay or access goods, or taking extra risks by using cash. In short, **limited access to technology and the internet, limits adolescent girls ability to exercise their fundamental human rights.**^{lxxii}

Technology and Innovation Action 1: Tackling gender-based violence online by occupying online spaces and advocating for gender transformative legislation and social network policies worldwide

Sub theme (what): Online Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Girls are increasingly online, including in developing countries, however, the increase in access to the internet, including social media, has not been coupled with appropriate measures to address young people’s safety, and it has not been sufficiently gender-sensitive. GBV which girls are subjected to offline is manifesting online and in new ways. As such, there is a rapidly increasing population of digital natives who are being exposed to increased harm without the necessary protections.

Online GBV is violence that is motivated by the sexual or gender identity of the target or by underlying gender norms. Online GBV and cyber abuse is an emerging global public health and human rights issue that affects the safety and well-being of individuals. Online GBV includes behaviours such as stalking, bullying, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech, exploitation and gender trolling, which are carried out utilizing computer and mobile technology.^{lxxiii} It disproportionately affects girls, adolescents and women; women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online^{lxxiv} and almost three quarters of women have experienced some form of online violence^{lxxv}. Adolescent girls face harassment and violence when they engage in online public interactions or political debates, as a result, girls and women self-censor and withdraw from online spaces, preventing them from becoming effective drivers of social and political change. Due to **increased harassment and violence, if adolescent girls withdraw in these spaces during this crisis there is a heightened risk they will not be heard. We need to work to make online spaces safe for adolescent girls through digital safeguarding.**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, online communities have become central to accessing information, education and social connectivity. However, as internet use has increased, as has the exposure to cyberbullying, risky online behaviour and sexual exploitation.^{lxxvi} The lack of face-to-face contact with friends and partners may lead to heightened risk-taking, such as sending sexualized images. During this crisis, adolescents are more vulnerable to being targeted and falling victim to grooming, cyberbullying, sextortion and other online risks.^{lxxvii}

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Legislation must address online GBV** and this needs to be treated in the same way as GBV offline by the police and the legal systems
- **Reporting mechanisms on social media platforms must be strengthened**, specifically GBV and child safeguarding reporting. These mechanisms should be designed with those affected. There should also be specific guidelines and best practices on how to safely engage online and on social media, with linkages to mental health platforms orientated around online violence.
- **National helplines, services and other child-friendly reporting mechanisms must be adapted to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.**^{lxxviii}
- **Technology companies and social networks must also do more to detect and stop harmful activity against children online**, including grooming and the creation and distribution of child sexual abuse images and videos.^{lxxix}
- **Social networks should also work to collect data on GBV online**, including through reporting functions, so that the full scale of the issue is understood and interventions can be developed accordingly.
- **Children should be educated to increase their knowledge of these issues** and empowered to report these issues and equipped to work together to address them.
- **Technology platforms** can be utilized where accessible to help girls and women to establish and moderate information sharing groups, it can provide a confidential place for GBV survivors to seek help, to receive emotional support and to be linked to referral services, as well as on the practicalities of social distancing, and managing the social and mental health impacts of the pandemic and response, including coping with increased mental, emotional, physical loads.
- Civil society, governments and schools should provide **workshops, teacher training, cyber security classes** and similar initiatives to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe online.
- **Girls and women should be supported to occupy online spaces** by creating spaces and content relevant to them, developing solidarity actions, amplifying their voices and lived realities online, and ensuring consent is at the centre of the operation of online platforms
- Provide specific protection for **girl human rights defenders**.
- **Adopt and implement policies to respect and protect open, accessible and safe online civic space**, provide a secure access to the internet and include digital literacy and digital security in national curricula.

Best practice examples: Evidence

- <https://www.apc.org/en/news/take-back-tech-feminist-learning-circles-playful-conspirational-strategising-and>
- Plan International's Girls Out Loud Platform: <https://plan-international.org/approach/innovation-girls-out-loud>

Technology and Innovation Action 2: Promote adolescent girls as creators of technology by ensuring gender-sensitive national STEM curricula and opportunities for adolescent girls to acquire digital skills, globally

Sub theme (what): Adolescent girls as creators of technology, not just as consumers

Over 90% of jobs worldwide have a digital component and over the coming years most jobs will require increasingly sophisticated digital and ICT skills.^{lxxx} To prepare girls for these jobs of the future **it is essential for governments to equip girls with digital and ICT skills through prioritising**

education in these subjects. Removing barriers to girls' access, use and creation of technology should therefore become an essential part of education and skills training.

Increased access to STEM education and opportunities would support adolescent girls to pursue STEM careers, equipping them with the tools to become creators of technology not just users.

Technology is primarily designed for, and created by, men and does not reflect the interests of adolescent girls. Only 6% of global app developers are female.^{lxxxix} **The lack of diversity among the creators of technology can contribute to technology reproducing and entrenching gender inequalities.** Diverse teams are more productive, better at solving problems and ensures that the product caters to the needs of a larger share of the population. Adolescent girls' need to engage in creating the digital future, otherwise, that future will not be fit for purpose for the whole of society and we won't come up with the best innovative solutions for combating climate change, poverty, inequality and injustice.^{lxxxii} Digital technologies play a huge role in driving societal shifts, if adolescent girls do not partake in this, the world may not be shaped in a way which reflects their interests.^{lxxxiii}

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **ICT and STEM education should be added to national curriculum, including with STEM education projects designed specifically for girls where necessary.** This is critical in ensuring girls and boys receive equal opportunities to gain experience and confidence in tech. Studies have found that teaching technology in an elementary school, girls' interests in tech rises to match those of their male peers and they had increased technological self-confidence and a better idea of what technology 'is'^{lxxxiv}
- **ICT and STEM work and career opportunities specific for adolescent girls**
- Technology companies need inclusive recruitment and employment practices (for example, un-biased hiring, flexible working, equal pay)
- Learning environments in schools need to support girls to pursue ICT and STEM subjects by addressing harmful gender norms and discrimination
- Address sexism and gender-based discrimination in technology in the sector, education system and workplace. According to the State of European Technologies (2018), as many as 46% of the women surveyed reported to have experienced discrimination in the tech sector.
- Providing training opportunities for teachers to improve their ability to support girls in STEM more effectively
- More funding and scholarship opportunities for adolescent girls to pursue education in tech/STEM
- Improving opportunities for girls to explore technology in and outside of school, alongside this is the need to address harmful gendered stereotypes about who should attend and access these opportunities. In addition, part of encouraging girls to engage in extracurricular tech and STEM activities might be ensuring that they involve creativity. The lack of creative learning experiences outside of school, and within schools too, particularly for coding and programming can be considered a key barrier to girls' engagement with computing studies^{lxxxv}
- Governments and the private sector should promote role models and mentors in the ICT sector for girls.

Best practice examples: Evidence^{lxxxvi}

- In October 2017, the Swedish Government adopted a national Digital Strategy with three focus areas to be implemented until the year 2022; Digital competences for everyone; equal access; and research and monitoring on the possibilities of digitalization, are outlined as crucial in reaching the goals of becoming a leading nation in digital competences. Important elements in the strategy include integrating programming and digital source criticism in the elementary school curriculum, as well as digitalization of national exams.

- In Sweden's updated educational time plan for year 1-7 students of 2019, elementary school students will get 47 hours allocated to technology, increasing to 65 hours in middle school and 88 hours in high school. According to the syllabus, these hours include providing opportunities for students to develop a technical awareness and technical knowhow to give them skills to address technical challenges in a conscious and innovative way. Alongside science classes, this increases the opportunities for young women and men to gain technical skills that could lead to an interest in becoming a creator of digital technologies.
- The Norwegian Government's policy document Digital agenda for Norge includes five main priorities, all of which are central for the digital development of the education system. More education opportunities in programming and technology throughout school system, an increased focus on teachers' digital competence and improved digital equipment are a few of the necessary steps highlighted to ensure that the current and future needs of the individual, society and industry are catered for
- Ernst & Young developed a mobile platform in collaboration with Tribal Planet to help adolescent girls (13-18 years) pursue STEM in a entertaining and rewarding way. The EY STEM Tribe platform features modules focused on science, such as climate change or space exploration; technology, such as artificial intelligence, 3D printing or blockchain; the future of work and skills that may be required for future jobs; and inspirational stories of women in STEM. Girls choose topics based on their interests. To help incentivize learning, they earn points as they complete an activity, such as reading an article, interviewing members of their community, completing an experiment or watching a video. As girls build their “rewards wallet” they can be redeemed in three ways: STEM-related products; work shadowing opportunities or virtual mentoring sessions on topics such as building a CV or interviewing skills; or they can choose to donate their points to a non-profit cause of their choice related to empowerment of girls and women^{lxxxvii}
- Summer Immersion Program by Girls Who Code offers rising 11th and 12th grade girls 300+ hours of instruction in web development, design, robotics, and mobile development, which serves over 1,500 girls in 20 markets nationwide in 2020.^{lxxxviii}

Technology and Innovation Action 3: Enabling the enjoyment and exercise of fundamental human rights by improving access to the internet

Sub theme (what): Access to mobile internet

Mobile is the primary way in which people in low- and middle-income countries access the internet.^{lxxxix} Boys are 1.5 times more likely to own a mobile phone compared to girls^{xc}. The gender gap in using mobile internet access is currently largest in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where 34% and 35% of women use mobile internet respectively. The biggest barriers to accessing mobile internet are affordability (device and, to a lesser extent, data), literacy and skills, safety and security, and a lack of relevant content.^{xcii} Adolescent girls' restricted access to mobile internet limits their ability to engage in public discourse, learn, and communicate online as discussed above. With many global platforms for advocacy and influencing taking up virtual alternatives in COVID-19 crisis, without access to mobile internet limits opportunities for adolescent girls to learn, engage and influence decision-making and policy processes.

Access to mobile data is essential to be able to engage effectively during the COVID-19 crisis.

Improving and enabling access to mobile internet is an important step towards ensuring girls and young women are not marginalised as the crisis unfolds, whilst also representing an opportunity to bridge the digital gender divide.

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Mobile Network Operators globally should take measures to **make mobile internet access more inclusive** with a particular focus on making educational content and health-related information and content freely accessible through **zero-rating relevant websites** as well as **increasing data allowances and lowering costs**
- Governments and regulators should create enabling environments for Mobile Network Operators to enable **increased connectivity and mobile internet access**, as well as **remove consumer facing taxes on internet use**
- To take more of a **gender transformative approach in their responses**, recognising the specific requirements of girls, Mobile Network Operators should **involve girls in decisions** to enable mobile internet access
- **Public Private Partnerships could be leveraged** to improve access to devices through **lowering costs and to extend free Wi-Fi access** in public areas
- **Costs of accessing and using technology should be lowered**, or introduce a **female friendly financing mechanism**.

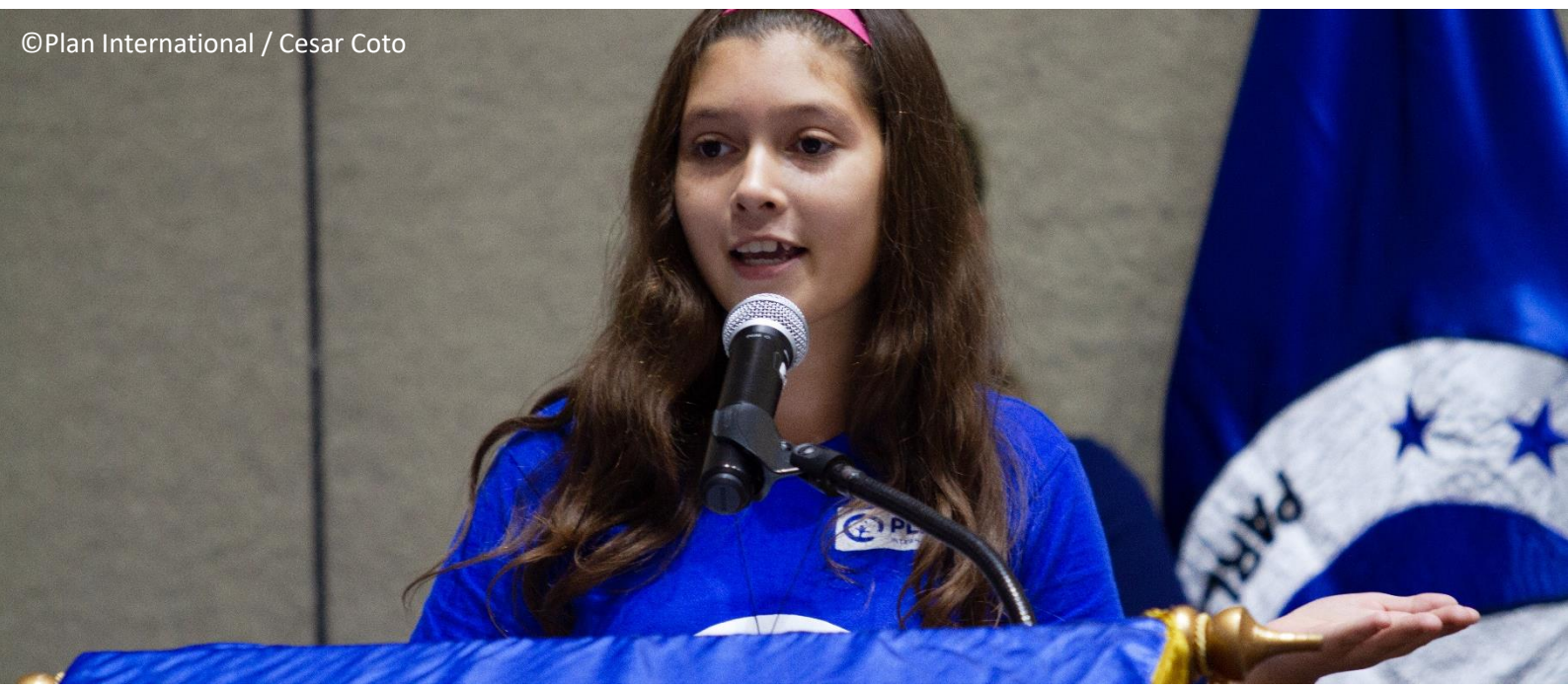
ACTION COALITION ON FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

Rationale for focusing on Adolescent Girls

The world is home to 900 million adolescent girls and young women, and that number is growing. Many of them **face unprecedented challenges, especially in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic**, but they all hold enormous potential. Together they are poised to be the largest generation of female leaders and change-makers the world has ever seen. Promoting the voices and views of adolescent girls in all their diversity and supporting them to actively engage in decision-making throughout the COVID-19 response and beyond must be a priority for the world's power holders.

Disease outbreaks affect girls and boys differently and understanding the needs, knowledge and concerns of population groups is essential for designing effective responses. However, girls and young women, being among the least adequately represented social groups in politics worldwide, are less likely to be consulted or represented, which leads to their specific needs not being considered and services being less effective.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exacerbates the disadvantages girls and women already face, worsening an already unfair situation. Everywhere, the burden of care for siblings, children and elderly family members is falling to girls and women.



It is imperative we keep amplifying girls' voices and strengthening their leadership through this crisis. Adolescent girls and young women's participation in policy decisions is critical to ensure that States take their interests into account.

Faced with shrinking civic space, adult-centric spaces for political participation, and growing frustration due to perceived inaction from world leaders, adolescent girls are increasingly rising up to take action and exercise their civic and political rights. From Malala to Emma Gonzalez and Greta Thunberg, girls are already leading, calling out injustices and challenging decision-makers to do better. For the first time, girls have been acknowledged as human rights defenders by the Human Rights Council resolution in 2018^{xcii}.

But for every young activist that breaks through, there are thousands more who are being ignored, not taken seriously or deliberately silenced. For girls and young women on the frontline of grassroots activism, the threat to their civic freedoms, the fear of gender-based violence, combined with additional barriers and risks they face as a result of their action during the COVID-19 pandemic, makes their work all the more dangerous.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to violence in public spaces if they choose to become more visible and outspoken, which can often limit or prevent them from becoming effective drivers of social and political change in their communities and beyond. Across the world, social distancing and national lockdowns have closed civic space and opportunities for direct engagement, organising and mobilising. Activists and advocates are increasingly mobilising online, but face harassment and violence when they engage in online public interactions or political debates. Women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online^{xciii} and almost three quarters of women have experienced some form of online violence^{xciv}. As a result, girls and women self-censor and withdraw from online spaces, preventing them from becoming effective drivers of social and political change. Many of the global platforms for advocacy and influencing, key for youth organisations to affect change, influence decision-makers and mobilise resources, are also taking up virtual alternatives. But these online platforms aren't accessible by everyone. In various contexts, buying data bundles to get online is hugely expensive. Some of the girls and young women activists don't own personal devices and have to use family/community devices to connect, with small or no privacy, thus endangering themselves. Lastly, governments sometimes monitor and restrict access to digital platforms, making it even more challenging for girl-led groups to organise while putting their security at further risks.

Girl-led groups and young feminist organisations with particularly young members exist and work with some of the most vulnerable populations. However, they are severely under-resourced, and this is set to worsen as the impacts of COVID-19 reduce funding streams to civil society, putting their sustainability in jeopardy. Pre-COVID, only 1% of gender-focused international aid reached women's organisations, a tiny fraction of which will have reached girl-led groups^{xcv}. They also face many barriers in accessing funds due to registration challenges, lack of bank accounts, limited technical, administrative and financial capacity etc.

Adolescent girls are part of the most informed, connected and engaged generation on social and gender justice, but due to their age and gender, they are often met with hostile reaction and face a double layer of discrimination, amplifying existing barriers to their political empowerment and leadership. As such, their agency, specific needs, rights and interests must be explicitly recognised. Authorities should create space and strengthen the role of youth- and girl-led organisations in coordinating bodies for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inclusive quality education, access to internet and digital tools and digital literacy are also powerful and important tools for achieving active civic engagement. It plays a critical role in building the necessary skills to challenge the status quo, develop leadership and demand an inclusive and equitable world.

More urgently than ever, we need to make space for girls to speak up safely, and listen to what they have to say. We need to help amplify their voices, whether that's at home on lockdown, in public or online. We need to open the doors and pull up a seat at every virtual decision-making table.

Feminist Movements and Leadership Action 1: Strengthen girl and young women-led movements working on gender equality and young feminist activists, networks and associations, formal and informal, through increased multiyear flexible funding, and non-financial support.

Sub theme (what): Strengthen girl and women-led movements and young feminist activists and associations

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- **Strengthen girl and young women-led movements** working on gender equality and young feminist activists, networks and associations, formal and informal, through increased **multiyear flexible funding, and non-financial support**, following their own priorities, including responding to unexpected needs.^{xcvi,xcvii}
- **Enable girl-led groups and young feminist associations to register officially** if they wish to, through changed laws and administrative practices.
- Provide girl-led groups and young feminists associations with **additional support to create an enabling environment**, including safe spaces and engagement of men, boys and families.
- **Build organizational capacity** as identified by girl-led groups and young feminist activists and associations through **multi-year core support** e.g. capacity building on self-organisation.
- **Reach small, remote, non-digital, marginalized, minority organizations** as well as funding and supporting those working on difficult and sensitive issues.
- **Intentionally fund and support new and non-mainstream groups**, including those often not legally registered and those in early stages of their development.
- **Support connections between groups** to support learning, knowledge transfer and alliance-building with women's groups and movements.
- Ensure **girl-led groups and young feminist activists and associations' lead in the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and governance** of financial and non-financial support initiatives as experts (participatory approach).
- Support networking, **mentoring and capacity-strengthening opportunities**, access to decision-makers and decision-making spaces, self-care strategies and support to self-organise.
- Identify and provide **rapid and emergency support to girl-led groups** and young feminist associations e.g. legal support.
- Bring the **voices of marginalized, vulnerable adolescent girls from across the nexus** of developing country contexts, climate impacted regions, protracted conflicts, fragile states, and forced displacement contexts **to international forums** as primary stakeholders, in collaboration with women's rights organizations.
- Support local girls' rights organizations with **GBV, WASH, social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) and other COVID-19 response information** to prevent and respond to the virus. Identify and engage with local girl- and youth- led organizations to:
 - Form social networks with women's/girls' groups and provide remote advice and support for GBV and other resilience building support
 - Engage girl-led organizations in COVID-19 clusters and coordination groups

- Provide funding to girl-led organisations to develop and implement projects and initiatives in response to COVID-19 and other gender-related implications of the virus.
- Together with girl-led organisations, carry out advocacy/influencing with health and relief service providers (government, non-government, private sector) for gender-responsive adolescent-friendly and inclusive service delivery.

Feminist Movements and Leadership Action 2: Implement institutionalised mechanisms ensuring safe and meaningful engagement of adolescent girls and girl-led civil society organisations in decision-making at all levels of governance, from school board to local councils and global forums delegations, including in peace processes, humanitarian action and response to pandemics.

Sub theme (what): Support adolescent girls to become leaders and take part in all decisions affecting their lives

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Implement institutionalised **mechanisms ensuring safe and meaningful engagement of adolescent girls and girl-led civil society organisations in decision-making at all levels** of governance, from school board to local councils and global forums delegations, including in peace processes and humanitarian action.^{xcviii, xcix, c, ci}
- Provide **inclusive gender transformative education** which includes a focus on human rights and civic and political education equipping girls and young women with the necessary skills, knowledge, critical consciousness, confidence and experience to exercise their rights, engage in civic and political participation and be leaders and decision makers.
- Use **local and national COVID-19 response communication platforms to share awareness messages and social norm change campaigns**, tackling discriminatory gender biases and encouraging boys and men to share the burden of family care and household work that too often falls onto girls' shoulders. The global unequitable division of household labour holds girls and young women back, preventing them from fulfilling their potential leadership.
- **Advertisers, entertainment providers and education ministries at national and global level end the use of damaging stereotypes** and instead commit to working with girls to produce content that truly challenges negative gender norms in society, increasing diversity, affirmative language and positive images of girls and feminist movements.
- Ensure **legitimate space for girls and young women to monitor public services** at local, national and global levels and report on key human rights and SDG mechanisms with emphasis on establishing child-friendly feedback mechanisms that are gender responsive and easily accessible.^{cii, ciii}
- Take measures to **address all threats and gender-based violence in the workplace**, especially in decision making spaces and promote an empowering environment for girls and women.
- Use of **quotas** for elections.^{civ}
- **Lowering the voting age** to below 18 years old and lowering the eligible age to run for and hold public office to 18 years old.
- Local and national authorities **challenge sexism and discrimination within families and communities including by engaging men and boys as allies** in promoting gender equality, and create a strong support network for girls' leadership aspirations
- States take increased actions to **tackle harmful and discriminatory gender biases and norms** that are perpetuated across all sectors and environments.

- **Meaningfully include adolescent girls in the peace and security agenda**, which focuses on their potential as peacebuilders.
- Governments should recognize the role of education and non-formal initiatives in the empowerment of children and young people as active citizens and gender equality champions and must **ensure all children and youth receive human rights and civic education** at primary and secondary levels.
- As outlined in SDG target 4.7, governments, UN bodies and civil society organisations should work together to **ensure that girls and young women understand and claim their rights, including through gender equality and human rights education and dissemination of human rights information in child and youth friendly formats.**
- Governments should **undertake a gender review of their Education Sector Plans** including on curricula, textbooks, pedagogy and teacher training to ensure that learning materials are non-discriminatory, gender responsive, inclusive and do not reinforce gender stereotyping around leadership roles and styles and ensure girls have the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to exercise their rights and empower them to be leaders and decision makers.
- Governments should **ensure child participation in schools as a crucial component of their learning process**, where children and young people, particularly girls and young women, learn to express themselves, develop their opinions and critical consciousness, listen to others, and build the necessary skills to become active citizens.
- Schools should provide **spaces and opportunities for girls to exercise their leadership and citizenship skills** including through student councils, mock elections, and active engagement in school governance structures where they can liaise with their peers, teachers and parents.
- **Engage men, boys and gender diverse people to champion adolescent girls' rights to participation, voice and leadership.** This includes ensuring that male engagement messages are integrated in SBCC for positive masculinities, GBV prevention, positive parenting, and equitable distribution of resources, shared decision-making, and gender equality.

Feminist Movements and Leadership Action 3: Increase girl-led groups and young feminist associations' freedom to organise, assemble and speak out online, without fear of threats, harassment or violence. Adopt and implement policies to respect and protect open, accessible and safe online civic space, provide a secure access to the internet and include digital literacy and digital security in national curricula.

Sub theme (what): Support adolescent girls' activism in time of COVID-19 crisis

HOW (tactics) To address this situation, the following actions are recommended:

- Increase girl-led groups and young feminist associations' freedom to organise, assemble and speak out without fear of threats, harassment or violence, both online and in public spaces through prevention, social norms change campaigns, responses with enforced laws and policies and strengthened reporting mechanisms. **Provide specific protection for girl human rights defenders.**
- Adopt and implement policies to respect and **protect open, accessible and safe online civic space**, provide a secure access to the internet and include digital literacy and digital security in national curricula.
- Provide **girl-led groups and young feminists associations with additional online support**, including connecting to decision-makers virtually, benefiting from mentorship
- Strengthen girl and young women-led movements working on gender equality and young feminist activists, networks and associations, formal and informal, through **increased multiyear flexible funding, and non-financial support**, following their own

priorities, including responding to unexpected needs **Legislation must address online GBV** and this needs to be treated in the same way as GBV offline by the police and the legal systems

- **Reporting mechanisms on social media platforms must be strengthened**, specifically GBV reporting. These mechanisms should be designed with those affected. There should also be specific guidelines and best practices on how to safely engage online and on social media, with linkages to mental health platforms orientated around online violence.
- **Social networks should also work to collect data on GBV online**, including through reporting functions, so that the full scale of the issue is understood and interventions can be developed accordingly.
- **National helplines, services and other child-friendly reporting mechanisms must be adapted to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.**^{cv}
- **Children should be educated to increase their knowledge of these issues** and empowered to report these issues and equipped to work together to address them.
- **Technology platforms** can be utilized where accessible to help girls and women to establish and moderate information sharing groups.
- Civil society, governments and schools should provide workshops, **teacher training, cyber security classes** and similar initiatives to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe online.
- **Girls and women should be supported to occupy online spaces** by creating spaces and content relevant to them, developing solidarity actions, amplifying their voices and lived realities online, and ensuring consent is at the centre of the operation of online platforms

ⁱ Gender and adolescence, GAGE, 2019: https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Conceptual-Framework-2nd-Edition_WEB.pdf

ⁱⁱ ECW, <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/the-situation/>

ⁱⁱⁱ WHO (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf;jsessionid=DB98F2B84445AAF0550975FE3E4473A3?sequence=1

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