

## YOUNG LEADERS' OPEN SPACE DIALOGUE

February 2022

### Purpose

To ensure that AGIP's girl and youth engagement strategy for 2022 is informed by the thoughts and inputs from girl and young leaders, AGIP organised Young Leaders' Open Space Dialogue with girl and youth leaders on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

### Objective

Young Leaders' Open Space Dialogue created an opportunity for young leaders to:

- Network with other adolescent and young leaders from diverse backgrounds
- Exchange their experiences as young leaders in the social development sector
- Review the list of key policy windows in 2022
- Discuss how global policy spaces (specially Generation Equality Forum) can be made relevant to young leaders at community level



### Process

The event was co-created with 2 adolescent girl leaders and 1 youth leader. It created a space where adolescent and young leaders from diverse backgrounds had open discussion on their experiences and aspirations on meaningful girl and youth engagement in the social development sector as well as share recommendations on what more needs to be done to bridge the global-local divide.

<p><b>Design and facilitation team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 adolescent girl leaders</li> <li>- 1 youth leader (woman)</li> <li>- 2 AGIP members</li> </ul> <p><b>Event support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 additional AGIP members</li> </ul>	<p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 adolescent girls</li> <li>- 2 young women</li> </ul> <p>Representation from Brazil, India, Kenya, Tanzania, USA, Uganda, and Venezuela</p>
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## Key points from discussion with adolescent girl and young women leader

### 1. Suggestions from adolescent girl and young women leaders on ways AGIP could ensure their meaningful inclusion

- Fellowship/ mentorship
- Continue creating open dialogue spaces
- Awareness and capacity building spaces
- Collate and amplify relevant resources
- Provide tools to hold commitment makers accountable/ engage and advocate with local leaders

*I really enjoy mentorship programs. They help with skill and capacity building. AGIP could organise mentorship programs for girls across the globe. Also, I am entering college soon and I feel that there is a lack of evidence and publication that highlight issues of adolescent girls. AGIP could support young college students who would like to initiate their research projects on girl centric realities and provide platform to publish their work. People don't usually listen when we say we are young leaders. So, if AGIP could provide a platform to publish our work, people may listen as association and support from international organisations can have that effect.*

- Maria, Youth Leader, Brazil

- Generate evidence on girls' lived realities
- Promote and support girls' leadership at various levels of decision-making
- Networking and learning exchange spaces with peer leaders
- Tools and capacity building to connect and work with girls who are not directly connected with mainstream opportunities
- Enabling girls to take lead under AGIP brand and amplify their leadership

## 2. Recommendations from adolescent girl and young women leaders on ways to make Generation Equality commitments relevant to their community contexts

- Information to be made accessible to young leaders in partnership with schools, universities, CSOs, collectives etc.
- Mentorship, skill and capacity building platforms to be organized to enable adolescent and youth inclusion and fore fronting their leadership
- Facilitate meaningful connection between young leaders and local political leaders
- Clear and accessible mechanism to track commitments
- Clear and accessible advocacy toolkits and resources to engage with local leaders both political and other peer young leaders
- Awareness and accessibility of national regional organizations/ collectives engaging in the GE implementation and ways to engage with them
- Accessibility of funds to participate in implementation and accountability of the commitments
- Information on relevant opportunities to join GE implementation and accountability efforts at national/ local levels

*I find the policy documents to be a bit challenging in terms of technical language that is generally used. There is a need for simplification of the messaging of such policies such that it is accessible to people with varying levels of education. It is also important that such messaging is clear on what it means for each and every girl, so that we are not further marginalising them by being too high level and technical. Having simplified, illustrated or animated versions that girls can connect with at different levels of learning is important.*

- Maria, Youth leader, Kenya

*The first and foremost requirement (to make global policy processes relevant to local contexts) is access to funding. There is a lot of groundwork like travelling to various communities, accessing digital devices etc. that requires funding and young people need more support in being able to do including capacity building support.*

- Rose, Adolescent Girl Leader, Tanzania

## 3. Factors that enable meaningful participation of adolescent and young leaders

- Safe spaces for adolescent girls to engage with peers and openly exchange their experiences, concerns, and aspirations
- Receiving mentoring support to build self-awareness and self-confidence
- Leadership skills related training sessions
- Support and opportunity to share experiences and hold space in key advocacy and policy making spaces
- Capacity building support to understand local and national affairs
- Financial support to continue education, and enable participation in decision-making spaces
- Collectively working on community level projects

*The organisation I am associated with has provided us (girls with disabilities) mentorship and helped us build our self-awareness, boost our confidence and be able to share our opinions and experiences with others. It has helped me and many girls with disabilities to have high self-esteem and emerge as leaders in our communities.*

- Annette, Adolescent Girl leader, Kenya

#### 4. Factors that hinder meaningful participation of adolescent and young leaders

- Language barriers
- Inaccessible information- jargon, lack of awareness
- Lack of capacity building support
- Lack of funding to enable our participation
- Non-supportive behavior/attitude of teachers, parents, and other adults
- Mindset of adult stakeholders/powerholders that adolescent and youth leaders are not qualified to contribute (“too young”)

*One big challenge is people not believing you or understanding the urgency of the problems that you are trying to shed light on. I feel that professionally, sometimes people do not treat me seriously, partly because I am young. So, in some ways I am not qualified to have a say on how we can make our industries more sustainable or how we can fix the Pacific garbage patch and other issues. This attitude that because we are young, we are less qualified and less important to have a say and contribute to problem solving. But we are seeing the shift now with young activists like Greta Thunberg and that's good. But there is still a long way to go because our issues are still not being fully paid attention to. It seems that people in positions of power with extreme privilege have no empathy for our issues and perspectives.*

- Trisha, Adolescent Girl leader, USA

#### 5. Issues that need more attention as well as greater inclusion of girl and young women leaders

- Inclusive education for girls with disability
- Girls' inclusion in climate action
- Support for teenage mothers/ pregnant girls
- STEM for girls
- Focus on Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- Racial justice especially reducing racial disparities in the education system
- Legal support when young people face violence
- Bodily Autonomy
- Funding opportunities and accessibility
- Girls and women's agency over their bodies and life decisions e.g., choice of marriage, pregnancy, career etc.



#### 6. Levels of engagement

- Not much initiative in schools and community level
- Lack of awareness about key policy and advocacy spaces and ways young people can join forces in a meaningful way
- No opportunities/space for young leaders to connect with local political leaders meaningfully to initiate and sustain community level action

## Experience of girl and youth leaders who co-created and co-facilitated this event with AGIP

*Safeguarding process has been a highlight for me. Initially it seemed very detailed but revisiting it during our design discussions helped me realise different aspects of safeguarding. I really appreciate the informed consent part, that was new for me. Usually, we sign up to things without being much aware of our options and this really brought my attention to it. The focus on safeguarding and the whole process has been very useful for me. I am now more intentional and aware with respect to safeguarding in my engagements with other girl and young leaders.*

- Nurat, Youth leader, Kenya

*I can say that from the engagement and space that I got, one of the most valuable takeaways I got was the opportunity to work with fellow leaders and with the AGIP team. That being said, the networking and privilege to bring on board issues concerning young girls has been a major takeaway because then I have been able to be part of the solution changer. Also, having a very supportive group from AGIP has really been one of the best highlights of this engagement.*

- Georgina, Girl leader, Kenya

*My key takeaways from this opportunity are:*

*Good facilitation skills – during the process I learnt so many interaction techniques from Pooja and from the rehearsals I discovered new and better ways to facilitate events.*

*Knowledge about other spaces around the world –From the event, I've come to learn of the existence of spaces like GEF, AGIP etc and what they do.*

*New colleagues- in this opportunity, I met substantial people who were my co-young leaders and with whom I'm sure I'll know and perhaps work with in the future.*

- Yeanoh, Girl Leader, Sierra Leone

Below you will read the poem as collectively penned down by adolescent girls in three different groups during the peer bonding activity to express their voices and experiences as young feminists.

*We are the young leaders,  
This is what we say...*

*We say: we will be heard!  
We are young innovators  
We are this generation's change  
creators  
We are powerful and strong  
We are not the voiceless –  
We are the voice of the voiceless  
Our voices matter!  
Our communities matter!  
We will not be silenced!  
We are courageous and inspiring!  
We speak truth to power!  
We know the way – and we show  
the way.  
**WE ARE THE FUTURE!***

*We are the young leaders,  
This is what we say..."*

*It is our time to stand for what we  
think is best for all of us young girls  
alive today,  
Since we are confident and valuable  
and our voices matter,  
We are willing to help others and to  
support them fulfil their dreams,  
We share different things like  
culture, ways of life and language,  
We are not perfect, we will never be  
perfect, but we are just trying to  
learn from each other  
We also have the right to dream but  
taking care of ourselves.  
The world will be a better place if we  
lead it!*

*We are the young leaders,  
This is what we say..."*

*We have POWER!  
We have POWER to SUCCEED!  
We will ALWAYS SPEAK UP!  
We can do what we want!  
We are UNSTOPPABLE  
We can also encourage others!  
We are the leaders of tomorrow  
But we are also the leaders today!  
We are heroes of our own stories!*