GIRLS' LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Celebrations and Lessons from AGIP's First Adolescent Girls Advisory Committee

Adolescent Girls Investment Plan



This handbook was co-created by AGIP Cohort 1 Girl Advisors Darshana, Jaliyah, Luisa, Misati, Nhi, Paola, Rushna, Vanessa, and Ximena, together with AGIP's Youth Engagement and Advocacy Specialist, Pooja.

It captures key celebrations, lessons, and insights from AGIP's first Adolescent Girls Advisory Committee (AGAC), with the hope of inspiring more organisations to embed girl-centered decision-making at the heart of their work. It calls on all allies for girls' rights to champion intergenerational leadership by creating meaningful spaces—such as Advisory Bodies—where girls can actively shape the policies, programs, and interventions that impact their lives. We hope reading this handbook brings you as much insight and inspiration as we found in creating it together.

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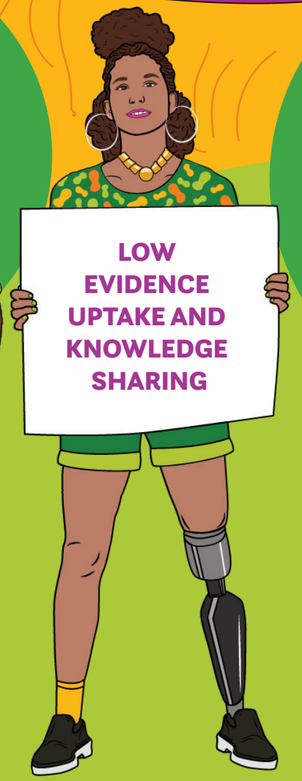
ABOUT THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS INVESTMENT PLAN (AGIP)

AGIP is a global, intergenerational, feminist coalition with members working with and for adolescent girls across advocacy, research, and at community level



WHY WE EXIST?







OUR VISION

A world where **girls have the voice, choice, and agency** to determine their own futures, **supported by holistic investment** that responds to the full complexity of girls' lives and needs





OUR MISSION



DRIVE **POLITICAL COMMITMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY** AND **EVIDENCE-INFORMED INVESTMENT** TO CREATE POSITIVE IMPACT FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY

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THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AGAC)

Adolescents and youth have the fundamental right to be heard and participate in decision-making processes as recognized by international human rights frameworks like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. GOAL

In March 2023, AGIP launched its 1st **Adolescent Girls Advisory Committee** to

- fulfil our international commitment to advancing MGYE
- share decision-making power with adolescent girls
- hold ourselves accountable to the same strandards of best practice on girl engagement as we recommend to others in the sector

2. COMPOSITION

- AGAC has **12 girl leaders** from diverse backgrounds
- **8** Girl Advisors are aged **10-19**
  4 are aged **20-24**
- They are based in **10** different countries

3. WHERE IT SITS

AGAC members inform all levels of work at AGIP and 3 AGAC members are part of the AGIP Board helping bridge the gap between senior leadership and the advisory committee



4. HOW IT WORKS

- AGAC meets monthly to review AGIP's progress, and provide feedback on upcoming projects
- AGAC runs multi-lingually in English, Spanish and French
- Each call has elements of capacity strengthening and rapport building
- 3 AGAC members were also elected by their peer Girl Advisors to join the AGIP Board

5. VALUES OF ENGAGEMENT

Intentional focus on safeguarding, wellbeing and trust-building

Dedicated time to celebrate wins, offer support, build sisterhood and solidarity among Girl Advisors and AGIP focal points

Mentoring calls, buddy system, and needs-based learning calls to foster mutual learning spaces

Amplifying the voices and leadership of AGIP Girl Advisors beyond AGIP through blogs, speaker positions, facilitation roles for global advocacy spaces

Intergenerational solidarity and power sharing through board roles and pairing each Girl Advisor with an AGIP Board member to enable leadership coaching and mutual learning

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MEET THE COHORT 1 GIRL ADVISORS

At the start of their AGAC journey, each Girl Advisor shared what they're passionate about—and what they most looked forward to:



Passionate about girls' education in crisis; eager to learn and advocate for girls in conflict zones.

VANESSA (10, CAMEROON)



Focused on girls' leadership and SRHR; looks forward to mentorship and using her voice for others.

SHIAN (13, KENYA)



Cares deeply about girls' wellbeing; wants to ensure girls are truly heard in decision making.

DARSHANA (17, NEPAL)



Advocates for education, disability inclusion, and animal rights; eager to amplify girls' voices.

RUSHNA (17, PAKISTAN)



Menstrual education advocate; excited to grow as a leader and connect globally.

PAOLA (17, NICARAGUA)



SRHR champion; aims to advocate for change and empower more girls.

MISATI (18, KENYA)



Committed to ending period poverty; excited to learn and represent girls' voices.

ELIZABETH (19, KENYA)



Passionate about SRHR; looks forward to exchanging diverse perspectives.

XIMENA (19, PERU)



Passionate about gender equality and inclusion; aims to use her voice for global change.

BUI Y NHI (21, VIETNAM)



Advocates for access to basic needs for marginalized groups; keen to learn from others and grow as a change leader.

JALIYAH (22, BARBADOS)



Focused on youth-led governance and SRHR; eager to push for young people's participation in decision-making.

LUISA (23, MEXICO)



Works on girls' empowerment and health; looks forward to learning and sharing experiences.

FARIDA (23, MALI)

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AGAC BEST PRACTICES

INCLUSION & VALUING YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Start with clarity

Share clear Terms of Reference, run a transparent selection process, and provide onboarding with accessible tools and guidance

2. Language inclusion

When onboarding a multi-lingual cohort, conduct all meetings and communications in multiple languages languages e.g., English, Spanish, and French with full interpretation support in our case

3. Design for accessibility

Simplify application processes, define inclusive selection criteria, and ensure engagement formats are accessible to all



4. Financial & non-financial support

Provide fair financial recognition, mentorship, resources, and leadership-building opportunities throughout the term

5. Embed Intergenerational engagement

Include GAs in the Board and projects, pairing them with adult mentors to enable power-sharing, knowledge exchange, and support

6. Respect time commitment:

Schedule recurring calls based on cohort's feedback e.g. weekends in our case, and limit overall time demands to accommodate school, care, and personal responsibilities

7. Equity in selection

Prioritize applicants with no or limited prior opportunities to expand leadership access for girls from underrepresented and marginalised backgrounds

8. Co-creation as a value

Invite GAs to co-create and co-lead monthly meeting, shape event participation, design engagement models—including future cohorts

9. Extend engagement

Offer extended engagement e.g., from one to two years, if preferred by GAs, to enable deeper participation and greater impact

10. Create ongoing feedback loop

Build-in spaces for regular reflections through check-ins, live feedback during monthly calls, reporting etc



CENTRING JOY & WELL-BEING

1. Safeguarding support system

Pair each girl advisor with a trusted adult from her community to offer ongoing, real-time support and safety

2. Budget for wellbeing

Include flexible wellbeing allowances as part of financial recognition to support personal needs

3. Joy as a value

Prioritise spaces for check-ins, trust and relationship building in each engagement to balance activism with wellbeing

Being part of AGAC empowered me to represent girls' voices and contribute to lasting change. I've grown confident in public speaking, decision-making, and inspiring others.

- Aliya Bhaldar, Girl Advisor, EMpower, India

Too often, decisions are made for girls without them. AGAC's mission to put girls at the table, shaping decisions for themselves, is truly worth applauding.

- Mboringong Rita, Mentor, WESAD, Cameroon

AGAC gave me space to speak about real issues in my country—protests, injustice—and see those realities reflected in decision-making. That made me feel seen and valued.

- Kateryna Shymkiv, Girl Advisor, Global Fund for Women, Ukraine



In December 2024, AGIP Girl Advisors hosted a powerful webinar with peers from EMpower and the Global Fund for Women covering three different AGAC models. Check out the webinar summary to read more.

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CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

While we celebrate the achievements of the AGAC model, we acknowledge that there is more to do to deepen intergenerational leadership and meaningfully shift power and resources to adolescent girls. Below are the key challenges we encountered—many of which we continue to address collaboratively with Girl Advisors:



BALANCING ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

AGAC members are highly committed, but each is on a unique learning journey. Managing diverse aspirations within a limited time commitment is difficult, especially while respecting their academic and personal obligations. Greater involvement would require transitioning to a part-time internship or employment model, which is currently beyond AGIP's operational capacity.



PACE AND COMPLEXITY OF ENGAGEMENT

While Girl Advisors are invited to join Working Groups, Taskforces, and the Board, the pace and volume of information can be overwhelming for them. We remain mindful not to overburden them, prioritizing wellbeing alongside meaningful participation. We continue to adapt formats and expectations to ensure that engagement remains empowering rather than exhausting.



LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

Operating in multiple languages is essential but resource-intensive. Despite simultaneous interpretation and translation efforts, one Advisor reported not feeling fully connected due to language differences. Going forward, we will ensure that at least two fluent speakers per language are present in each cohort to support mutual learning.



TIME AND BUDGET FOR MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring all communications, meetings, and materials are multilingual requires significant time and budget investment. While Girl Advisors suggested expanding to more languages, we engaged in open conversations around budget limitations to build understanding of the real costs involved—especially in a tightening funding environment.



STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND OFFLINE BARRIERS

Not all adolescent girls—especially those under 18 or from marginalized backgrounds—have access to devices, internet, or consistent community support. This affects their ability to engage consistently, follow up on discussions, or conduct additional research to build their own understanding in relation to their peers.
To address the accessibility issue, AGIP remains committed to funding community-based mentors to support girls' learning, safety, and consistent participation.

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IMPACT OF AGAC

IMPACT ON AGIP

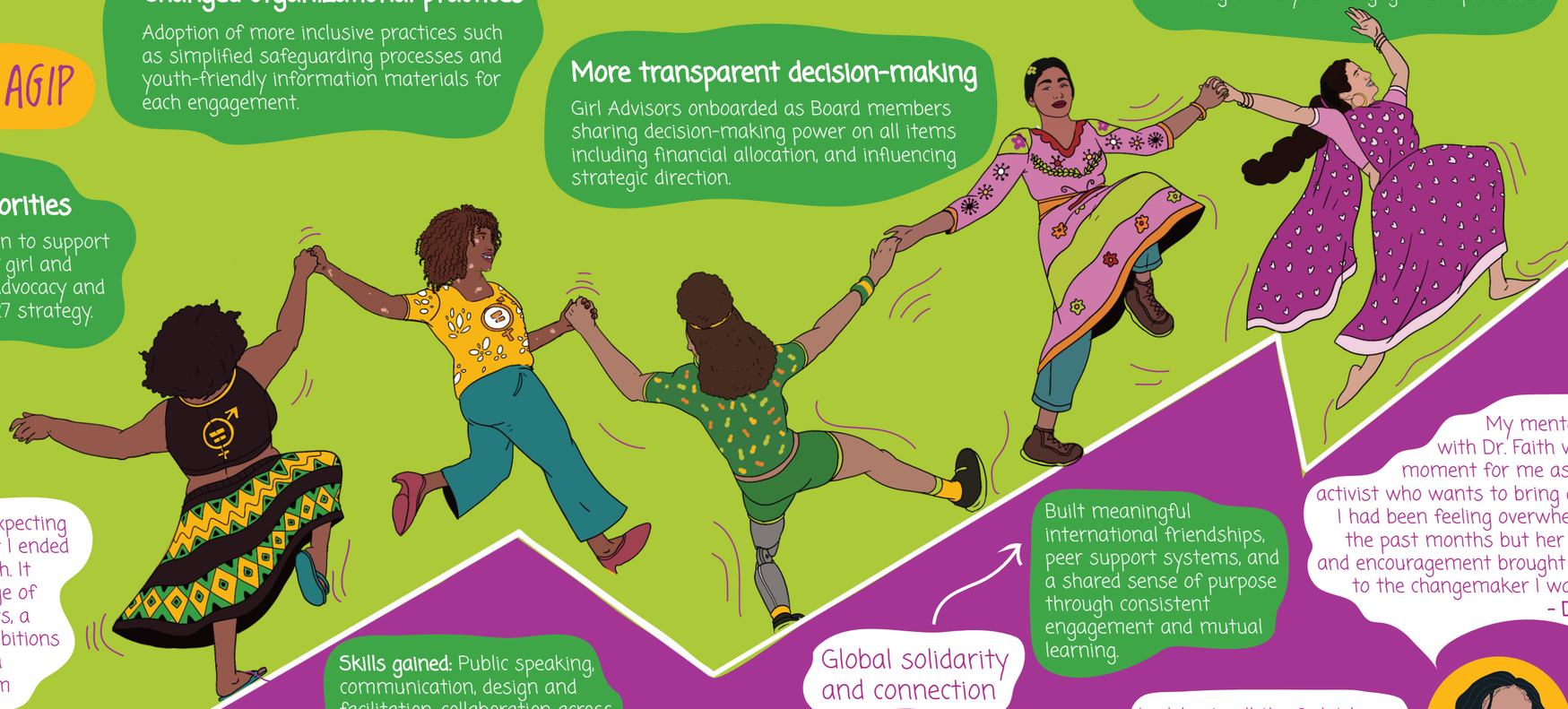
Changed organizational practices
Adoption of more inclusive practices such as simplified safeguarding processes and youth-friendly information materials for each engagement.

Stronger engagement model
Multilingual support, tailored resources, and community-based mentorship improved AGIP's girl and youth engagement processes.

Modelling best practice
AGIP's open sharing of AGAC practices inspired interest and learning among peer organisations.

More transparent decision-making
Girl Advisors onboarded as Board members sharing decision-making power on all items including financial allocation, and influencing strategic direction.

Shifted funding priorities
Greater resource allocation to support in-person participation of girl and youth advisors in global advocacy and policy spaces in 2025-2027 strategy.



You enter mentorship expecting to support or guide—but I ended up learning just as much. It was a powerful exchange of perspectives and insights, a chance to hear their ambitions directly and be part of a conversation led by them

Faith Mwangi-Powell, AGIP Board Member, CEO, Girls Not Brides

IMPACT ON GIRL ADVISORS

Personal and professional growth

Skills gained: Public speaking, communication, design and facilitation, collaboration across cultures, time management, project management

Skills strengthened: Empathy, supportiveness, active listening, respect for diverse perspectives, centering joy and well-being, accountability

Knowledge gained:
1. Clearer understanding of girls' issues worldwide
2. Deeper understanding of global advocacy spaces and how they function
3. Recognition of the role girls and young people play in shaping global policy
4. Insight into coalition work and decision-making processes
5. Awareness of safeguarding protocols and transparency

Global solidarity and connection

Built meaningful international friendships, peer support systems, and a shared sense of purpose through consistent engagement and mutual learning.

Recognition and leadership opportunities

AGAC members have received access to influential networks, exposure to senior leadership, connection with AGIP colleagues across different fields, mentorship opportunities with AGIP Board members, and visibility and recognition within global advocacy platforms like the Global Forum for Adolescents, WD2023, sidelines of UNGA, as well as taking part in AGIP virtual research launches.

My mentoring call with Dr. Faith was a big moment for me as a young activist who wants to bring a change. I had been feeling overwhelmed for the past months but her guidance and encouragement brought me back to the changemaker I was before. - Darshana



I celebrate all the Girl Advisors for creating a space full of sisterhood, respect, and active listening. - Nhi





My favourite memory is from one of the monthly calls where we set aside the agenda due to low energy. Girl Advisors were invited to share how they were feeling, which created a space for personal stories, deeper understanding, and trust-building—fostering real empathy in the group. - Misati

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GIRL ADVISORS' EXPERIENCES

At the end of their 22-month journey*, we asked each Girl Advisor: **"How have you grown—personally and professionally—during your time on the Advisory Committee?".** Here are their reflections:

AGAC was transformative, helping me connect with inspiring people and build confidence as a changemaker. Mentorship from Faith supported my growth as an independent, thoughtful leader. I now better understand coalitions and global organizations—insights I apply in my current role at YUVVA.- Darshana

I've grown in empathy and safeguarding, learning to engage across generations with kindness—thanks to Pooja's values-driven leadership. Professionally, I've gained insight into adolescent realities and philanthropic project management—skills I'll carry into my future roles. - Jaliyah

AGAC helped me strengthen communication, time management, and leadership skills. I've learned to express ideas clearly, balance responsibilities, and make decisions more confidently and effectively. - Farida

I've grown mentally, emotionally, and socially—becoming more mature, confident, and supportive. I now express my ideas freely and educate girls in my community about their rights and decision-making. International exposure taught me the value of networking and creating safe spaces. - Vanessa

I gained confidence in English advocacy and a deeper understanding of coalition structures. I also learned more about the challenges adolescents face across different regions. - Ximena

One favourite memory was when we all shared something about our countries—I learned so much. Meeting my buddy in person deepened our connection. I also gained experience in meeting design and facilitation—lessons I'll carry forward as a girl leader. - Elizabeth

I've grown from a shy girl into a confident, self-assured person, opening doors to new opportunities. I built strong networks, improved communication skills, and deepened my understanding of global issues by actively engaging and learning from others. - Shian

Hearing from fellow Advisors built my confidence and assertiveness. The experience deepened my empathy and reinforced my commitment to adolescent girls' right to health. I also gained a broader understanding of different regional contexts through our diverse cohort. - Luisa

Being a Girl Advisor helped me become a more empathetic listener and global citizen, better equipped to reflect on the diverse realities of girls. Professionally, this first Advisory Council experience gave me the confidence to fully own my role, thanks to a supportive, mentor-driven space. - Rushna

Working with diverse Girl Advisors taught me to listen without judgment and respect cultural differences. I now have a stronger instinct for safeguarding. AGIP's structured processes and multilingual communication helped me appreciate preparation and organization as essential professional skills. - Nhi

This first global experience gave me clarity on how advisory committees work and the vital role girls play in policy-making. I developed key professional skills in collaboration and communication, and built the confidence to navigate global advocacy as an SRHR advocate. - Misati

AGAC boosted my confidence and helped me connect with other passionate changemakers. I gained insights into governance and leadership, which led to opportunities like winning a project competition through Impulso Joven and attending the 2024 Global Youth Dialogue in Benin. - Paola



*With 5 month voluntary extension offered to 9 Girl Advisors to co-create knowledge transfer documents, review and approve AGIP's 2025-2027 strategy, explore alumni engagement pathways, and envision second cohort's engagement.

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CONCLUSION

1.USE OF THIS REPORT



This handbook highlights the foundational work required to meaningfully establish and sustain an AGAC, shares the tangible impact, and honestly acknowledges the challenges encountered along the way.

2.FINAL FINDING



The Adolescent Girls Advisory Committee model is a powerful and transformative approach to ensuring that girl-centered interventions and advocacy are co-created with adolescent girls themselves.

3.INVESTMENT AND RETURN



While this model is time-intensive and demands intentional budgeting and long-term commitment, our experience shows that when done with care, patience, and openness, it creates lasting value. It strengthens organizational strategies and decision-making, while also enabling the leadership journeys of girl advisors—young changemakers who go on to inspire their peers and shape a more just and equitable world.

4.LONG-TERM IMPACT



The impact of intentionally supporting girls with access, learning, capacities, and opportunities reaches far beyond what can be captured in a two-year report. It is an investment in a future led by confident, capable, and empowered young leaders.

5.OUR RECOMMENDATION



We strongly encourage peers across the sector who are committed to girl-centered programming and advocacy to consider establishing their own AGACs. Sharing decision-making power with girls is not only a critical step toward meaningful engagement—it is also a powerful way to truly walk the talk when it comes to equity, inclusion, and transformative change.

6.WHAT NEXT FOR AGIP



We will continue this model, with a second cohort of AGAC planned for launch by the end of 2025. Stay tuned!

In an increasingly challenging environment, it's essential that we gather energy and strategies to remain vigilant, and diligent, and form alliances like AGIP to make sure that we can continue to safeguard and protect girls' rights and decision-making for intergenerational leadership, and gender equality.

- Kathleen Sherwin,
AGIP Board Co-chair, Chief Strategy
& Engagement Officer - Plan International

Inclusion of adolescent girls in decision-making is not just a nice-to-have—it's a must-have. For real change to happen, girls must be at the table, shaping the decisions that impact their lives.

- Darshana

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HOPES FOR THE NEXT COHORT

I wish for more girls like me to have this opportunity with the same support we had.

~Shian

I hope the next cohort achieves even greater things and takes AGIP to new heights.

~Vanessa

I hope they form a diverse, supportive sisterhood and carry forward the AGAC legacy.

~Misati

I hope they build stronger communication with AGIP to align decisions better.

~Luisa

I hope they learn, grow, connect, express, and care for themselves while making change.

~Nhi

I hope they receive more opportunities and love AGIP as much as we do.

~Darshana

I wish for a diverse, collaborative, and impactful cohort that inspires change.

~Farida

I wish they gain the same opportunities and go even further in innovation and impact.

~Jaliyah

I wish for fresh ideas and even greater inclusivity in the next cohort.

~Ximena

I hope they carry our sense of community, communicate AGIP's work widely, and meet in person.

~Paola

I wish they feel the same sense of belonging and realise the impact of their voices.

~Rushna



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