



# AN AGENDA FOR GLOBAL ACTION

**The *Girls Count* series does more than uncover adolescent girl-specific data. It is also shaping an ambitious, far-reaching but practical agenda for global action.**

The agenda's goal? Unleash the power of the 600 million girls in the developing world to change their lives, their communities and nations.

For those who shape policy, design programs and allocate resources, the agenda highlights concrete steps they take in their arenas of influence, today.

It starts with 10 Actions that apply across all sectors, then goes deep into critical areas for girls, like health and education.

As we understand more about girls' lives, opportunities and barriers, the agenda will likewise grow and change. Its latest and greatest form can always be found at

[www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org](http://www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org).

# 10 ACTIONS:

## HOW GIRLS TODAY CAN END POVERTY TOMORROW

### COUNT

#### 1 Give adolescent girls an officially recognized identification

Ensure governments register all newborns and provide birth certificates to ensure access to health services and education. Furnish government-issued identification cards for all girls and boys over age 10 to reduce economic and social exploitation and to prevent girls' underage marriage.

#### 2 Collect data on adolescent girls and disaggregate it by age and gender to assess whether programs are reaching adolescent girls

Track program beneficiaries by age, gender, marital status, location, family income and school enrollment status in all programs and sectors. Analyze this information to assess whether programs are reaching adolescent girls—especially the most vulnerable. Regularly report results to increase accountability, share learnings, target solutions, demonstrate success, and catalyze more resources.

### INVEST

#### 3 Increase funding for adolescent girls – and track what it achieves

Increase bilateral development funding for gender equality by 20% as part of a comprehensive effort to invest in adolescent girls. Mobilize resources from foundations and corporations to address girls' needs. Deploy gender and girl experts in-country to advise on program design and ensure resources reach girls. Press for specific investments for girls by integrating their interests and needs in all major initiatives and by beginning such investments as early as 10 years old.

#### 4 Expand opportunities for girls to attend secondary school

Provide schooling for all girls through lower secondary school, or to age 16, at a minimum, using subsidies, scholarships and conditional cash transfers to make it affordable for disadvantaged girls. Expand primary school facilities to house secondary school classes. Invest in non-formal schooling options to reach the most vulnerable girls. Track enrollment, completion rates, and the percentage of girls at grade for age to measure progress.

#### 5 Re-focus HIV/AIDS prevention strategies to focus on adolescent girls

Given the disproportionate infection rates between girls and boys, implement prevention programs targeted to girls. Create a girl-specific focus within the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to innovate new approaches and advocate for a girl-specific focus within country-level HIV plans and strategies. Track HIV resources to ensure they reach and benefit girls.

#### 6 Re-orient health delivery systems to work for adolescent girls

Provide adolescent girls with services that are accessible, customized, confidential, and nonjudgmental. Offer check-ups for girls starting at age 10 that screen for reproductive and sexual health risks such as domestic violence and unintended pregnancy as well as for country-specific health issues like malaria. Target at-risk pregnant girls to reduce maternal mortality and conditions, such as fistula.

#### 7 Economically empower adolescent girls by building and protecting their assets

Build marketable skills by enhancing the relevance of educational curricula and developing after-school tutoring and mentoring programs. Develop internships, apprenticeships and training opportunities to promote girls' transitions to safe and productive livelihoods. Offer financial education programs – both formal and non-formal -- for girls at age 10-14 to build economic assets and financial literacy early in life. Work with microfinance and banking institutions to design services for girls, including savings accounts so girls can protect their assets.

### ADVOCATE

#### 8 Make the law work for adolescent girls

Press for the repeal of laws that legitimize discrimination against girls and women in spheres such as legal personhood, marriage and family, property rights, workplace and physical integrity. Work for laws and policies that prohibit gender-based discrimination, address violence and harmful practices, and ensure equality of access to health services, education, jobs and earnings, credit, and property ownership. Recognize positive reforms taken by governments and use their actions to encourage similar steps in neighboring countries or regions.

#### 9 Equip adolescent girls to advocate for themselves and their communities

Educate girls on their rights. Train and equip girls to educate leaders about their lives and to press for the enforcement of laws and policies that protect and enhance their rights. Engage girls in creating and executing programs and services that improve their own lives and those of their families and communities.

#### 10 Mobilize communities, families, men and boys to support adolescent girls

Support religious and community leaders and head teachers to foster healthier, more supportive communities where girls can create and execute their own solutions. Engage men and boys as program co-beneficiaries and as important agents of solutions.

R. Levine, C. Lloyd, M. Greene and C. Grown.  
*Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda.*  
Center for Global Development, Washington D.C. (2008).

# TAKING ACTION FOR GIRLS' HEALTH

## **1** Implement a comprehensive health agenda for adolescent girls in at least three countries.

Working with countries that demonstrate national leadership on adolescent girls, bilateral donors, the World Bank, the WHO, UNFPA, and UNICEF can comprehensively support girl-focused interventions (including girl-friendly reproductive health services), broad health sector changes, transformations in social norms, community resources for girls, and girls' schooling. Accompanied by operational and evaluation research and funded by domestic and international resources, the aim is to achieve full program coverage among the poorest segments of the population by 2016.

## **2** Eliminate marriage for girls younger than 18.

Child marriage is a manifestation of girls' powerlessness and a driver of health risks. International agencies should identify the practice, affecting at least half of all girls in about a dozen countries, as a human rights violation. Girls need national laws to prevent child marriage, along with donor support for national responses—for example, marriage registration systems and incentive schemes to keep daughters in school—and programs to mobilize communities and create viable alternatives to marriage.

## **3** Place adolescent girls at the center of international and national action and investment on maternal health.

New advocacy and programmatic investments give renewed hope for maternal health. Within advocacy and program efforts, specific attention to girls will pay off. Donors should support research on the risk factors for pregnant adolescents and evaluations of programming for girls facing high hurdles to health care. They should translate evidence into programming to reduce adolescent maternal mortality beyond labor and delivery to also include family planning, nutrition, and abortion-related care. Funding should be earmarked for adolescents within any new resource package for maternal health.

## **4** Focus HIV prevention on adolescent girls.

To turn off the tap of new infections and break the back of the epidemic, HIV prevention efforts must focus more on girls and young women. As the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and other major international HIV/AIDS initiatives step up HIV prevention efforts, adolescent girls must be at the forefront. This means supporting efforts to transform harmful social norms, ensuring that essential services and commodities are in place for girls, educating girls about avoiding HIV/AIDS as part of comprehensive sexuality education, and working with boys and men to change their behavior—for themselves and their partners.

## **5** Make health-system strengthening and monitoring work for girls.

If the health system is failing girls, it's failing. Health system strengthening strategies are unfolding, funded by vertical and health sector sources and new resources. Those designing health system reforms should pay particular attention to community-based service delivery for girls, girl-friendly reproductive health services, health worker training to increase competency on adolescent girls' and boys' health, and financing and payment strategies that prioritize girls' health.

## **6** Make secondary school completion a priority for adolescent girls.

Getting girls through secondary school is one of the most important actions governments can take to improve girls' chances for good health. Governments should extend the definition of basic education, to which all are entitled, to lower secondary or to age 16. Governments and the private sector, with donor support, must increase formal and non-formal school places by extending primary school facilities, offering targeted scholarships or household cash transfer schemes to disadvantaged girls, and offering open-learning programs so girls can study at their own pace.

## **7** Create an innovation fund for girls' health.

The evidence base on girls' health, and effective strategies to improve it, is weak. Girls urgently need investments in data collection (e.g. through the Demographic and Health Surveys and longitudinal studies) and multi-country evaluations of promising programs, including the 12-year-old check-in and programs to change boys' and men's attitudes and behaviors. Philanthropic funders could create an innovation fund to stimulate knowledge generation and dissemination, leveraging resources from governments and official donors' agencies along the way.

## **8** Increase donor support for adolescent girls' health.

Obtaining better health for girls requires significant—yet feasible—investment by governments, donors, and the private sector. There is no valid estimate of current spending on girls' health. In the absence of a baseline, but knowing that girls' health programs constitute a small share of current effort, OECD donors should increase official development assistance in areas that benefit girls by at least \$1 billion per year. This constitutes approximately 6% of current spending on global health. In addition, nontraditional donors, including emerging donors in the Middle East, should identify girls' health as a focus area and commit \$1 billion per year.

M. Temin and R. Levine.  
*Start with a Girl: A New Agenda for Global Health.*  
Center for Global Development, Washington D.C. (2009).

# TAKING ACTION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EDUCATION

## COUNT

### 1 Collect and compile data on non-formal education

A questionnaire module on non-formal education should be introduced into national household surveys and censuses to collect data on the extent and coverage of non-formal schooling, and its implementation should be tested on a pilot basis in several countries.

### 2 Build and maintain a global database for education programs for adolescent girls

Our program and project compendium should become the platform for the development of a dynamic global database of education programs that serve adolescent girls. Its scope should be expanded in order to identify promising models appropriate to girls' educational needs in different settings. This database should be made available to donors, practitioners, and international agencies.

## INVEST

### 3 Expand opportunities for girls to attend secondary school

Governments should define basic education as education through lower secondary school, or to age 16. To accommodate the resulting influx of students, governments and the private sector should increase the number of formal and non-formal secondary school places in the educational system by extending existing primary school facilities and offering well targeted subsidies to disadvantaged girls to attend either public or private secondary schools.

### 4 Support the non-formal education system

The non-formal education system must be well integrated with the formal system and be designed to help adolescent girls to achieve their educational and developmental needs. Non-formal schools must be upgraded, certified, and licensed, and pathways should be established from the non-formal to the formal sector, as well as from the formal to the non-formal sector. Baseline surveys should assess educational backgrounds, skills, and knowledge gaps of population subgroups who are potential beneficiaries, in order that educational systems can be designed to address existing needs.

### 5 Develop after-school tutoring and mentoring programs in both primary and secondary schools

These programs should support girls' education and development and enhance their chances of progressing to or succeeding in secondary school. They can provide one-on-one mentoring and ensure that after-school hours are dedicated to study and not to part-time jobs or family obligations. The programs can also provide supplementary training beyond the formal curriculum for the development of skills for social and civic participation—in the process teaching basic health, reproductive health, and financial literacy.

### 6 Produce curricula relevant to adolescent girls

Adolescent girls in the developing world need to acquire remunerative and marketable skills which are not taught at home, such as facility with computers, fluency in an internationally spoken language, financial skills, and knowledge of social systems. New methods to promote interactive and collaborative learning can help develop critical thinking and decision making skills and instill a habit of lifelong learning—capacities that will equip girls for a rapidly changing world.

### 7 Offer post-secondary vocational programs

The majority of girls who complete secondary school do not continue on to university. For girls going directly into the workforce, it is important to offer programs that support them in making a successful transition to remunerative work and household financial management. Such programs must be based on market assessments and provide relevant, flexible skills for employment and professional growth in an ever-changing global economy.

### 8 Provide training and ongoing incentives for women to enter and remain in teaching

Female teachers can reinforce the importance of education to girls, and many girls respond better to female teachers. The number of women who enter teaching is increasing, and teaching appears to be a viable, desirable profession for women who have completed secondary school.

## ADVOCATE

### 9 Promote easy transitions between non-formal and formal schools

Complementary schools should be developed within the non-formal education system to help girls, many of them primary-school dropouts, continue on to formal secondary school. They should also offer younger adolescents the opportunity to reenter formal primary school.

### 10 Encourage and evaluate innovation

The curricula in both formal and non-formal schools attended by adolescents should be revamped to develop new approaches to education. Although many of the current approaches are unproven, some appear particularly promising. To test their effectiveness, research/program partnerships should invest in designing and implementing pilot projects to measure and assess their impact on girls over the short and medium term.

C. Lloyd and J. Young.  
*New Lessons: The Power of Educating Adolescent Girls.*  
Population Council, New York (2009).

# TAKING ACTION FOR GIRLS' VOICES

**1**

## **Listen to girls and learn about their aspirations, and engage them in decision-making processes**

Shift the paradigm from working for adolescent girls to working with them as partners. Listen to the girls' unique insights into their lives and work alongside them to achieve their goals. Cultivate girls' voices and engage them in developing, executing and evaluating programs and services.

**2**

## **Engage families, teachers and traditional leaders as girl champions**

Build a network of community-based local girl champions that prepare the terrain for long-term, sustainable change. Create an enabling environment that facilitates girls' socioeconomic development, participation and self-expression.

**3**

## **Provide safe and inclusive community spaces where girls can develop and raise their voices**

Designate safe space areas and times when girls can meet, talk, play and learn, away from community and family pressure. Educate local officials and institutions about girls' rights and hold them accountable for when girls are excluded from public spaces—from sports fields to community centers to police stations.

**4**

## **Give girls public platforms to amplify their voices**

Include girls' voices at institutions, in media, at events and in campaigns. Provide girls with a platform to voice their opinions, and work with them to strengthen and amplify their voices.

**5**

## **Change social norms that stifle girls' voices**

Deliver true long-term change by addressing the most powerful silencer of girls: harmful social and gender norms that govern all aspects of a girl's life, from family to education, health care and livelihood. Commit to change those discriminatory norms in all interventions, across all sectors, through innovative solutions and collaboration.

Margaret E. Greene, Laura Cardinal and Eve Goldstein-Siegel.

*Girls Speak: A New Voice in Global Development.*  
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)  
Washington D.C. (2010).

# TAKING ACTION FOR RURAL GIRLS

## 1

### **Expand opportunities for rural adolescent girls to attend secondary school.**

Nationally mandate and provide funds for universal primary and secondary education. Make schools girl friendly—including increasing safety standards, improving educational facilities, and employing more female teachers in rural areas—to support completion of primary and secondary school. Improve the quality of teaching and relevance of rural school curriculum. Provide incentives to parents to keep girls in school to help offset costs. Enhance adult literacy programs in rural areas to increase school enrollment among girls.

## 2

### **Equip rural adolescent girls to be entrepreneurs, workers, and managers in the rural economy and beyond.**

Develop and promote time-saving technologies so girls can both attend school and focus on skill development. Incorporate practical knowledge and skill-building programs into both formal and nonformal rural economic development initiatives and education. Empower girls to be nontraditional extension agents, equipping them to offer agricultural, health, education, and adult literacy training to their families and communities. Offer innovation awards and incentives for creation of girl-friendly and supportive technologies. Support organizations, policies, and legal frameworks that eliminate discrimination against female workers and that support equal pay, safety, and security for working adolescent girls and women.

## 3

### **Prepare rural adolescent girls to be major stakeholders in agriculture and natural resource management.**

Include adolescent girls in country-level agriculture investment plans. Ensure equitable inheritance and land rights for adolescent girls and women by supporting efforts to change and enforce relevant national and customary laws. Increase adolescent girls' access to assets such as financing and agricultural inputs. Encourage donors to disproportionately dedicate climate change adaptation and/or mitigation monies targeting natural resource management to programs that ensure participation of girls.

## 4

### **Empower and provide opportunities for rural adolescent girls to have an active voice in household, community, and national decision making.**

Provide “safe spaces” and youth development programs—both girl-only and girls and boys—to build confidence and skills, develop peer connections, and provide mentoring. Support platforms for rural girls to participate in public dialogue and develop civic leadership skills. Use radio and television to inform and empower girls. Create more opportunities for girls' mobile phone ownership and Internet access.

## 5

### **Provide rural adolescent girls with comprehensive health information and services.**

Integrate adolescent health as a priority in national systems and policies. Increase rural girls' access to information and services using schools and community centers as entry points. Encourage growth of highly nutritious indigenous foods, local manufacturing of vitamins, local food processing, and addition of micronutrients. Provide greater services to young expecting mothers.

## 6

### **Improve rural adolescent girls' safety and security.**

Educate men and boys about the value of girls. Strengthen local and national practices for bringing perpetrators to justice. Educate girls on existing laws and offer services to those affected by violence. Find travel and time-saving solutions to girls' walking.

## 7

### **Count girls and measure progress.**

Record all births and disaggregate household and population data by age; gender; marital, educational, and socioeconomic status; and geographic location. Establish benchmarks by developing or refining specific measures for recommended actions and then report on progress at international and regional public venues biannually for the next ten years.

Catherine Bertini  
*Girls Grow: A Vital Force in Rural Economies*  
The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Chicago (2011)