



**A Girl's Eye View:**  
**A Literature Review on Girl Engagement**

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## **Executive Summary**

Adolescent girls can provide compelling evidence of and insight into critical issues that shape their daily lives and the obstacles they face in realizing their potential. Furthermore, girls offer diverse perspectives that are key to implementing effective and sustainable programs. The international development community recognizes that engaging young people in program and policy development is critical for driving practical, and beneficial, reforms. Strategies for incorporating young people into governmental and non-governmental processes and activities exist, though few focus on engaging adolescent girls. Additionally, a lack of clarity in the literature remains regarding measurements of success and which girl engagement strategies and processes are optimal.

Acknowledging the role, and importance, of girls in achieving inclusive and sustainable development is crucial to ensuring progress. All parties involved may benefit from girl engagement processes, including the organizations, professionals, and the girls themselves. It is crucial, however, to ensure that girls are not engaged merely as token participants but are given meaningful, inclusive opportunities to contribute their ideas, opinions, and insight.

Like any other strategy or process, there are certain challenges associated with girl engagement. Importantly, girls comprise a diverse population and hold a variety of interests, beliefs, and experiences. Girls face multiple and complex barriers to the realization of their rights, but they also have unique power and insight. Recent acknowledgement of girls' role in international development leads us to the task of ensuring that girls are able to utilize their strong and audible voice when it comes to policies, programs, or research that affects their lives. Meaningful girl engagement can ensure that girls' voices are heard, that their ideas are welcomed, and that their knowledge is used in developing and implementing sustainable and effective programs, research, and policies.

## **Introduction**

If engaged meaningfully, young people<sup>1</sup> can have a great effect on the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the programs and policies intended to serve them. Young people have first-hand knowledge of the environments, contexts, and factors that define and affect their behavior. Adolescent girls<sup>2</sup>, more specifically, can provide compelling evidence of and insight into critical issues that shape their daily lives and the obstacles they face in realizing their potential.<sup>32,35,9,12</sup> Furthermore, girls offer diverse perspectives that are key to implementing effective and sustainable programs.<sup>29</sup>

The international development community recognizes that engaging young people in program and policy development is critical for driving practical, and beneficial, reforms. Strategies for incorporating young people into governmental and non-governmental processes and activities exist, though few focus on engaging adolescent girls. Additionally, a lack of clarity in the literature remains regarding measurements of success and which girl engagement strategies and processes are optimal. This literature review examines the motivations for girl engagement and ways to engage girls in a meaningful way that benefits the individual girl and is informative for organizational structure, programs, and policies. It will discuss, among other things, certain challenges that arise when working with adolescent girls and possible ways of avoiding, or at the very least, ameliorating such issues.

## **Why Engaging Girls is Important**

Acknowledging the role, and importance, of young people in achieving inclusive and sustainable development is crucial to ensuring progress.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in order “...for programs to be relevant, authentic, and responsive to youth needs, young people must be involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating them.”<sup>13, p. 5</sup> Young people that are able to play a meaningful role in organizational activities and affect decision-making often feel a greater sense of ownership over the programs or projects they help build, leading to

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<sup>1</sup> Young people are defined here as anyone between the ages of ten and twenty-four.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Adolescent girls’ and ‘girls’ are used interchangeably within this review. Both are understood to indicate persons of the female sex between the ages of ten and nineteen.

greater participation and longer-lasting results.<sup>12,29,35</sup> Furthermore, youth-partnerships dismantle age-based hierarchy and allow for both adults and young people to contribute positively to programs, organizations, or communities.<sup>9</sup>

Research shows that it is common for girls entering adolescence to experience a ‘loss of voice’, meaning a struggle to actualize or take seriously their own experiences and opinions.<sup>12</sup> Girls encounter numerous obstacles to reaching their full potential, whether they be socio-economic, cultural, age-based, or a result of their sexual orientation or gender. Furthermore, negative peer relationships can lead to silencing, labeling, risky behavior, and peer exclusion.<sup>7,12</sup> Importantly, research also indicates that girls recognize the potential benefits that participatory activities can have on their confidence, collaborative skills, and sense of efficacy.<sup>31</sup> In order to eliminate obstacles and amplify girls’ voices, organizations must create participatory contexts that build on girls interests, strengthen their resolve, and nurture their personal development.<sup>12</sup>

Engaging girls in policy development, program design, monitoring, and evaluation, advocacy projects, and research is important for numerous reasons. Girls’ participation in evaluation and research promotes greater understanding of girls’ experiences and how those experiences affect their lives.<sup>9,29,35</sup> In addition, evaluations that are conducted by young people are more likely than those conducted by adults to gain buy-in from other young people, “...enhancing the likelihood of generating data that are meaningful and reliable”.<sup>9,p.229</sup> Girl-centered programs and interventions that include girls’ input in their design and implementation are often more effective and relevant than those that do not.<sup>9,31,35</sup> The girls themselves may benefit from these participatory processes as a result of the educational aspect, the increase in social capital, the program itself, or the experience interacting with mentors or role models.<sup>7,21,31,32,35</sup> Furthermore, adults benefit from youth-adult partnerships by gaining new skills, knowledge, and allies.

Girl engagement may be seen as a means to an end or as its own strategic objective.<sup>4</sup> Some organizations position youth participation and engagement as a basic right, while others consider it as a means to achieve program objectives or improve a project’s efficacy and influence. UNICEF and the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child highlight

children's right to participate, their freedom of expression, and the freedom to seek information.<sup>4</sup> Engaging girls could therefore be viewed from a rights-based, an outcome-based perspective, or both.

### **Definition(s) of Meaningful Girl Engagement**

Ideally, organizations would engage girls in a way that gives them a safe and supportive environment and, simultaneously, a serious platform to contribute. Girls, as with all young people, often lack the skills necessary to actualize their power of voice and therefore require training and guidance from adult and youth allies, who are themselves well-trained on how to partner with young people. Ensuring that girl engagement processes are undertaken mindfully and are ultimately beneficial to all parties requires a workable definition on which to base all analyses.

There are many ways in which youth engagement, participation, and partnerships are defined. Common among all these definitions, despite the difference in terminology, is a focus on the creation of equitable, intentional partnerships between young people and adults. In their report, "Youth Engagement in Development: Effective Approaches and Action-Oriented Recommendations for the Field", Matthew French, Sharika Bhattacharya, and Christina Olenik define 'youth engagement' as, "The active, empowered, and intentional partnership with youth as stakeholders, problem solvers, and change agents in their communities."<sup>13,p.4</sup> Youth-Adult Partnership is often defined as, "...involving youth and adults in responsible, challenging, and collective action that seeks to benefit an organization or larger community. All individuals in the partnership have the opportunity to engage in planning, decision-making, and action consistent with their own interests and skill."<sup>44,p.6</sup> Advocates for Youth condenses the definition of youth-adult partnership to, "...a situation where 'adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth'".<sup>4,BH 1</sup> Alternatively, the phrase 'youth participation' is also widely used in the fields of youth development, governance, health.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. National Commission on Resources for Youth defines youth participation as, "Involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunity for planning and/or decision-making affecting others, in an activity whose

impact or consequences extend to others – outside or beyond the participants themselves.”

4,BH 1

Meaningful girl engagement is defined here as ‘a participatory process in which girls’ opinions, ideas, and experiences are integrated into an organization’s activities or structure in an effort to make the organization or its activities more effective, accountable, and/or relevant to the girl population. Meaningful engagement requires that girls are treated as equals, that their diversity be recognized and appreciated, and that the girls and adults involved are given the proper training and skills to enable a fully participatory partnership.

### **Differences Between Engaging Young People vs. Girls Specifically**

Girls are a diverse population, made up of individuals from various geographical, social, cultural, socio-economic, and interpersonal contexts. Due to a multitude of factors, girls experience the world differently than their male counterparts. Girl engagement processes must, therefore, differ slightly from the general process of youth engagement or youth-adult partnerships.

Much has been written about best practices for building and sustaining effective youth-adult partnerships.<sup>4,29,34,44</sup> Strategies and processes for engaging girls specifically, however, are less accessible. Girls deserve engagement strategies that are appropriate for their social positioning, cognitive development, and experience of different cultural contexts. When attempting to engage girls, organizations must therefore recognize issues of safety, community buy-in, challenges associated with accessing girls, and girls’ diversity as a population group.<sup>12,34</sup>

### **Approaches to Girl Engagement**

There are many functions and activities in which young people, specifically girls, can engage. Whether an entity is private or public, focused on advocacy, research, policy, or programming, girl engagement is absolutely an option.<sup>13</sup> Girls can engage in outreach, communications, grassroots organizing, creating or popularizing media campaigns, decision-making in regards to policy or programmatic design, survey design, and many

other aspects of organizational structure and activities.<sup>5,13,43</sup> Engaging girls in research, monitoring and evaluation, and media campaigns are the best understood processes of girl engagement.

### **a) Engaging Girls in Research**

Engaging girls in research processes is quickly becoming a recognized and respected method of gathering authentic, insightful data. It is important to differentiate between engaging girls as researchers versus recruiting girls as research subjects. To be considered meaningful engagement, girls should be given the tools to conduct interviews, lead focus groups, design surveys, and analyze results with the support and guidance of well-trained adult allies.<sup>18</sup>

Participatory research methods, generally speaking, are an effective strategy for building strong partnerships between the researcher and the community, promoting community change, and increasing the efficacy of the intervention or program.<sup>9,29,31</sup> In a toolkit published by the Population Council in 2010, Karen Austrian and Dennitah Ghati guide readers through the development, strengthening, and expansion of adolescent girl-centered programs. “With some training and simple survey tools, they [girls] can go out into the community and collect information about a range of resources – including health services, schools, safety, and youth programs.”<sup>5,p.25</sup> The authors go on to note the multiple advantages to engaging girls as researchers, which include their ‘insider’ knowledge as community members and the development of the girls’ leadership and technical skills.<sup>5</sup>

### **b) Engaging Girls in Monitoring and Evaluation**

The process of engaging girls in monitoring and evaluation is similar to that of engaging girls in research and is mutually beneficial to the girls and the program they are evaluating. Engaging girls in monitoring and evaluation helps ensure that the programs or interventions designed to impact their lives are having the desired effects.<sup>9</sup> Girls can not only offer their individual expertise, but training girls to be evaluators can also increase their sense of leadership, produce more accurate evaluative results, and increase girls’ commitment to the program.<sup>9,31,32</sup> Furthermore, participatory evaluation research builds

organizational capacity and can assist in actualizing the ideal of equity into a real organizational structure of shared power.<sup>35</sup>

### **c) Engaging Girls in Media Campaigns**

In their important publication entitled, 'Girls Speak: A New Voice in Global Development', Greene, Cardinal, and Goldstein advocate for the inclusion of girls' voices in all areas of international, national, and local development. "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."<sup>18,p.V</sup> Engaging girls in advocacy or media campaigns not only amplifies their voices, but teaches them how to raise awareness and engage others. It is widely accepted, though less well-studied, that including girls in the design of media campaigns creates more authentic campaigns that have wider impact. Recently, private and public sector entities alike have embraced girls' voices as a way of improving or intensifying their message. Organizations must be mindful, however, that girls should not be engaged simply as mouthpieces or token subjects. Meaningful girl engagement requires that their opinions and ideas be integrated into all aspects of a campaign in order to improve authenticity and impact.

### **d) Additional Approaches and Frameworks for Girl Engagement**

Cascading leadership is a promising cross-contextual process that simultaneously engages girls and improves their leadership and social capital.<sup>5</sup> This method involves working with older adolescent girls or young women and training them to be leaders and manage programs for younger adolescent girls.<sup>5</sup> Participatory Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research are two very similar methods of engaging young people that can be deftly applied to girls. Participatory Action Research allows community members to imagine, design, and conduct the research with the assistance and support of trained researchers.<sup>17</sup> Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) engages those who are most affected by an issue and gives them the skills necessary to conduct research on and analyze that issue, with the goal of devising strategies to resolve it.<sup>32</sup> As the best source of information on the issues that impact their lives, adolescent girls are excellent candidates



for research projects that utilize participatory action or community-based participatory research methods.

Lastly, there are multiple frameworks that depict the processes and important aspects of youth engagement. Hart's Ladder is a foundational framework which illustrates the various levels of youth participation in an institution or activity. The most relevant aspect of Hart's Ladder to girl engagement is that it, "...highlights the fact that manipulation, decoration, and tokenism are examples of non-participation."<sup>13,p.4</sup> The highest rungs of the ladder display core values of youth engagement; the three highest rungs demand that adults share decisions with young people, that young people lead and initiate action, and that young people and adults share in decision making.<sup>13</sup>

### **Effects of Engaging Girls on the Girls' Lives**

There is ample evidence that when young people are actively engaged in meaningful volunteer and paid activities they are likely to show better self-confidence, perform better in school, and have a higher degree of social capital.<sup>21,22,34,44</sup> Youth-Adult Partnerships promote feelings of safety and belonging among youth, increase young people's efficacy and empowerment, improve their sociopolitical awareness and civic competence, and increase young people's connection with their community.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that young people who are engaged in civic society are more likely to have lower levels of alcohol and drug abuse, delay the onset of sexual activity, and have reduced levels of depression.<sup>22,30,31,44</sup> As a result of being engaged in institutional structures or activities, girls can develop leadership and technical skills, build better relationships with their peers and families, and demonstrate their effectiveness as community members and leaders.<sup>5,21,26,29,44</sup>

Girls, specifically, benefit from having access to safe spaces in which they can share their experiences and ideas, receive training, and have access to mentors and adult allies.<sup>7,9,35</sup> Studies indicate that partnerships between girls and adults can address the unique challenges faced by adolescent girls and build on their preexisting strengths.<sup>12</sup> Greater access to positive peer interaction gives girls the opportunity to explore their interests and

take on leadership roles that can translate to better school performance and greater activity within the broader community.<sup>5,9,12</sup> “In addition, peer networks teach girls how to resolve conflict, deal with setbacks, and become more accepting of others.”<sup>7,p.22</sup> While the extensive effects of girl engagement strategies remain to be studied, it is clear that engaging girls in programs, advocacy, research, and policy development can positively impact girls’ lives.

### **Effects of Engaging Girls on Programs or Policies**

The institutional goal of engaging girls is often to improve program or project efficacy and accountability. Girls can provide great insight on how to surpass logistical obstacles such as scheduling, program location, recruitment, and communication with gatekeepers.<sup>6</sup> Adolescent girls can also help determine program content by providing input on the most critical issues in their lives, such as financial stability, access to health care, safety concerns, or access to education.<sup>5,18</sup> “...a girl’s-eye view of her barriers can point the way to the highest-priority interventions...listening to girls and working alongside them to achieve their goals adds moral authority. Girls provide sharp insights into how to improve their own circumstances.”<sup>18,p.xvii</sup> In addition, girls can help ensure that all research tools are “youth-friendly” and use understandable and accessible language which may improve the quality of data collected.<sup>29,31</sup>

### **Effects of Engaging Girls on the Organization**

Collaboration between young people and adults strengthens organizations by expanding their capacity and enabling them to better support youth. Furthermore, “...the types of issues addressed by decision-making bodies (e.g. board of directors, school boards, local government) can begin to reflect the critical interests, concerns, and priorities of young people.”<sup>44,p.22</sup> When girls are engaged in institutional structures or activities they will be better served and the institution will be more accountable for their work.

Programs and policies better serve youth and communities if they are based on an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the issues affecting young people. “Youth participation

in decision making enables the organization to make informed decisions about the needs of young people. It contributes to building the overall capacity of the organization, strengthens political commitment, and presents a positive image.”<sup>34,p.3</sup> Furthermore, engaging girls and young people in institutional structures can affect the culture of an organization resulting in structures that are more need-based and youth-friendly.<sup>34</sup> Youth participation also affects norms and traditions as youth become a recognized part of a community decision-making process. In addition, youth organizers reach beyond the youth development field to engage a variety of community partners on complex issues.

### **Addressing Challenges Associated with Girl Engagement**

Like any other strategy or process, there are certain challenges associated with girl engagement. Importantly, girls comprise a diverse population and hold a variety of interests, beliefs, and experiences. Designing evaluative or research tools, program activities, or advocacy projects that are relevant for and interesting to all girls is therefore very difficult. Trainings intended for girls need to be accessible for girls at different stages of cognitive and emotional development, interactive, instructive, and appreciative of girls’ unique role in development work.<sup>35</sup> In addition to the personal aspects of girl participants, there may be adults in the institution or community that harbor attitudes that would block meaningful girl participation.<sup>34</sup> Some adults are not allies, but instead believe that young people are not capable of, and therefore should not be included in, affecting institutional structures or decision-making.<sup>34</sup> Methods of securing meaningful girl engagement must always include training for the adults involved so that the ensuing girl-adult interactions are as positive as possible.

Organizational structures, procedures, and processes are often very unfriendly to young people, girls in particular.<sup>34,13</sup> “Formality, jargon, and lengthy meeting procedures, for example, can all deter young people from feeling part of the process.”<sup>34,p.3</sup> These types of institutional realities can silence the very girls they are attempting to serve. Before engaging girls in any organizational activity, it is imperative that adult allies within the organization assess their capabilities and readiness for girl-adult partnerships. Naturally, there will be a period of transition that will bring successes and failures, but having a well-

conceived plan of girl engagement can help avoid, or alleviate, some inherent challenges. Guides and toolkits can be found in the appendices of this literature review that include suggestions on how to ensure that organizations are youth-friendly prior to initiating girl engagement.

Lastly, girl engagement processes must account for conflicting social or cultural attitudes that may not welcome girls' input in spaces outside the program or project. As mentioned previously, many societies do not value the opinions or participation of adolescent girls. While girl engagement methods seek to eliminate such discrimination, it remains a formidable challenge to ensuring meaningful girl engagement in research, policy development, program design, and advocacy campaigns. It is necessary to prepare girls for this possibility and give them the tools and support necessary to handle adversity and challenging situations.

## **Conclusion**

Engaging girls in research, advocacy projects, policy development, and program design, monitoring, and evaluation is not a simple process. The creation of meaningful partnerships between girls and adults takes careful planning, training, and monitoring in order to be truly effective and beneficial. Unfortunately, while much research exists concerning the benefits, challenges, and outcomes of youth-adult partnerships, very few resources focus specifically on girls' potential for meaningful engagement.

Empowering girls to realize and fight for their rights increases their ability to achieve their social, professional, and intellectual potential. Girls face multiple and complex barriers to the realization of their rights, but they also have unique power and insight. Recent acknowledgement of girls' role in international development leads us to the task of ensuring that girls are able to utilize their strong and audible voice when it comes to policies, programs, or research that affects their lives. Meaningful girl engagement can ensure that girls' voices are heard, that their ideas are welcomed, and that their knowledge is used in creating more sustainable and effective programs, projects, and policies.

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## Appendix I: Examples of Girl Engagement

### Examples of Engaging Girls in Research

- The Binti Pamoja Centre in the Kibera slum in Kenya engaged girls as researchers in an effort to better target their programming. Before starting an expansion phase of the program, alumni members, girls aged sixteen to twenty-one, gathered information about existing youth-serving programs in Kibera, whether there were girls in those programs, and if the places where activities were held were safe for girls. Ten alumni, working in pairs, were able to collect information on over 125 groups. That information was then used to create a map of where programs serving girls were located in Kibera and also which areas lacked such programs. The mapping information was used to guide Binti Pamoja's expansion and the same alumni who conducted the research used the map to determine where to create new girls groups in the underserved communities.<sup>5</sup>
- The Young Women's Leadership Alliance began in 2000 using a curriculum divided into three components: equity awareness, research, and social action. During the equity awareness component, girls participated in activities that explored their personal experiences of inequity and fostered team-building within the group. The research component required the girls to designate an equity issue at their school and design and conduct a research project to study it. "This involved writing research questions, creating a survey, and writing a data collection plan. Girls then collected, entered, analyzed, and made graphs of the data."<sup>12,p.89</sup> Their research fed into a social action project that addressed their issue of inequity through awareness raising and community mobilization. This program, through the girls' active engagement in the research process, created an environment in which girls could explore new skills, participate in the community, and gain the confidence to question unjust social structures.<sup>12</sup>
- Sisters in Strength (SIS) is a two-year youth organizing program for young women of color entering the tenth or eleventh grade who are based in New York, NY. As part of the Girls for Gender Equity program, SIS' activities are shaped by both the unique experiences and interests of the SIS youth organizers and by the Girls for Gender Equity's vision, mission, and goals. In 2008, Sisters in Strength engaged in participatory action research in NYC public schools to investigate the impact of sexual harassment on students. SIS youth organizers were able to collect data from over 1,100 participants from ninety public schools in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. Their findings demonstrated that sexual harassment was a normal part of students' in-school experience, that students needed more support

from adult allies in addressing and exposing sexual harassment, and that educators and students alike were unaware of their rights and how to apply them. The Coalition for Gender Equity in Schools later utilized the SIS research in their mission of eliminating sexual harassment in schools as to make them a better, more nurturing learning environment for all students.<sup>17</sup>

- The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Taasisis ya Maendeleo Shirikishi Arusa (TAMASHA), in collaboration with Pact Tanzania, developed a participatory research and action project entitled Vitu Newala that aimed to both understand and respond to girl's HIV-related vulnerabilities.<sup>23</sup> The project was conducted in Newala, one of the least developed districts of Tanzania. Qualitative data was collected using participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques from a cohort of eighty-two girls ages twelve to seventeen. The PLA exercises were conducted by Youth Researchers in an effort to, "...harness the voices of marginalized and disenfranchised sub-populations".<sup>23,p.5</sup> The final report detailing the project states that, "This participatory research and action project boasts a number of important achievements, the most important of which is the empowerment and mobilization of a group of dedicated and passionate advocates on behalf of youth."<sup>23,p.19</sup> The project not only raised awareness about HIV vulnerability and other important sexual and reproductive health issues, but also developed a culturally appropriate research methodology to investigate the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls in Newala.<sup>23</sup>

### Examples of Engaging Girls in a Program's Design, Monitoring, or Evaluation

- In 2002 PATH surveyed girls in Ciudad Sandino, a municipality in Managua, Nicaragua, to gain a better understanding of their reproductive health needs as part of the creation of the Entre Amigas program.<sup>18,24,25</sup> The survey suggested that friendships between girls and mother-daughter relationships were often sources of vulnerability, rather than sources of support. In response, the project team incorporated the feedback and ideas of community members, including girls, in the design and implementation of project activities.<sup>24</sup> Components of the program included peer education and other interactive activities focused around sexual and reproductive health, the organization of an all-girl soccer teams to help build trust among girls and increase their confidence, and the introduction of a thirteen year old girl and her family as new characters on a popular television soap opera. By listening and effectively incorporating girls' opinions and insight into program activities, Entre Amigas was able to increase girls' knowledge related to reproductive health and improve relationships among girls and mothers and

daughters in the area.<sup>25</sup> In their project description PATH states, “...the young girls who participated provided the clearest vision. They were leaders in the peer education program, contributors to a nationally televised soap opera, and full participants in the project’s design, implementation, and assessment. Empowering these young women to take charge of their own development was Entre Amiga’s greatest achievement.”<sup>24</sup>

- Between 2004 and 2007, Girls Incorporated used participatory evaluation research to explore the meaning and impact of Girls Inc. environments and programs. The evaluators trained Girls Inc. members to conduct the research in an effort to engage girls, fortify their youth-adult partnerships, and assess the efficacy of the program.<sup>9</sup> The evaluators hypothesized that a participatory evaluation method would, “...promote greater understanding of girls’ experiences at Girls Inc. and how these experiences affect their lives.”<sup>9,p.229</sup> Alternative to the traditional service model that focuses on researching girls as subjects, providing them with services, and advocating for them, the Girls Inc. leadership and advocacy model focused on treating the girls as equal partners in the program’s operations and success. Girls Inc. found that incorporating girls into their evaluation strategy provided a deeper understanding of what program qualities were important to girls and identified areas of improvement for local Girls Inc. programming and environments.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the evaluation process itself taught the adult evaluators important lessons about girls’ cognitive and social development and provided insight on how to create more supportive, effective programs.<sup>9</sup>
- UNICEF’s Right to Know Initiative strives to ensure that young people are able to access and understand the facts about HIV/AIDS.<sup>29</sup> In order to ameliorate the impact of HIV/AIDS, UNICEF proposes that young people must be educated, empowered, and given the opportunity to learn and strengthen life skills.<sup>38</sup> Young people themselves are the force behind the Right to Know Initiative. Young girls and boys are provided with the information that enables them to create, plan, and implement their own HIV/AIDS programs and prevention messages. Young people are partners in the initiative and use the tools and skills they gain from the initiative’s training program to develop their communication and research skills while spreading valuable messages about how to prevent, test for, and treat HIV/AIDS.<sup>38</sup>

### Examples of Engaging Girls in Policy Development

- Plan International’s Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is a youth-led group that advises Plan International USA, including its Board of Directors and Executive Team.<sup>28</sup> The

YAB develops projects and campaigns related to Plan International's work and strives to, "...create and nurture a connection between Plan's youth and its decision makers in order to reinforce Plan's mission of empowering and assisting children worldwide."<sup>28</sup> Plan International's YAB also assists in developing the projects of Youth United for Global Action and Awareness (YUGA), a national network of young people who take on world issues. Through campaigns and awareness raising activities, YUGA members educate their communities on global issues and engage others in finding solutions.<sup>28</sup>

- GirlVentures is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering adolescent girls by fostering a connection with, and appreciation for, the outdoors.<sup>14</sup> GirlVentures' Girls Advisory Board is comprised of a high school alumnae who are dedicated to supporting the work and vision of GirlVentures. Members of the advisory board serve as ambassadors for the programs, organize fundraising and outreach events, design activities, and facilitate workshops around the community.<sup>14</sup> Their work informs the greater GirlVentures programs while offering opportunities for girls to continue to build their confidence and leadership skills.<sup>14</sup>
- The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights is an international organization of young people dedicated to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights and the national, regional, and international levels.<sup>42</sup> It aims to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of all young people are respected, guaranteed, and promoted. The Youth Coalition also strives to meaningfully engage young people in decision-making processes that affect their lives. They focus on advocating for the inclusion of youth-friendly language in international documents and agreements, advocating to realized the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health rights for young people, building the capacity of young people to advocate on their own behalf, and affecting policy that has a direct impact on the lives of young people.<sup>42</sup>

#### Examples of Engaging Girls in Advocacy Campaigns or Projects

- The Girl Effect is a movement based on the unique potential of adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world. The project launched in 2008 with the support of the Nike Foundation, the NoVo Foundation, the United Nations Foundation, the UK Department for International Development, and the Coalition for Adolescent Girls.<sup>15</sup> The mission of the girl effect is to leverage the unique potential of adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves, their families, their communities, their countries, and the world. The project is fuelled by hundreds of

thousands of girl champions who recognize their own and other girls' untapped potential.<sup>15</sup> Through their website [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org), the Girl Effect provides the tools and resources girls need to advocate for their own needs and the needs of others. The project relies heavily on meaningful girl participation to raise awareness, mobilize communities, and advocate for change in government, business, healthcare, and education.<sup>15</sup>

- Girl Up is an innovative campaign developed by the United Nations Foundation. It is designed to offer girls in the United States the opportunity to become global leaders and raise awareness and funds for United Nations programs.<sup>16</sup> "Girl Up envisions a world where all girls, no matter where they live, have the opportunity to become educated, healthy, safe, counted and positioned to be the next generation of leaders."<sup>16</sup> The campaign engages adolescent girls as Teen Advisors and encourages them to share their ideas and feedback on all Girl Up activities and projects. Girl Up Teen Advisors participate in monthly meetings with other Teen Advisors and the Girl Up staff, serve as spokespersons at events, meetings, and conferences, lead Girl Up events and projects in their communities, and share feedback on Girl Up materials, mobilization tools, and social media messages.<sup>16</sup>
- Amplify Your Voice is a project by Advocates for Youth, an organization that champions efforts to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.<sup>1</sup> [AmplifyYourVoice.org](http://AmplifyYourVoice.org) is the online home for Advocates for Youth's Youth Activist Network (YAN) and encourages young people to voice their opinions and spread messages and information about policies that affect them, while providing technical assistance to young people, policy makers, and professionals.<sup>1</sup> Each year Advocates for Youth directly trains over two thousand youth activists through the YAN, helping them to reach their peers with information and advocacy focused on sexual and reproductive health.<sup>1</sup> Through Amplify Your Voice, the trained youth activists are able to reach others with their messages, call to actions, and information.
- The Working Group on Girls (WGG) is a coalition of over eighty national and international non-governmental organizations with representation at the United Nations.<sup>41</sup> It is dedicated to promoting the human rights of the girl child, advancing the inclusion and status of girls, and assisting girls in developing their full potential as women.<sup>41</sup> While advocating for girls and their rights, the Working Group on Girls ensures that girls from around the world are engaged and that their voices are heard on the regional, national, and international levels. "Throughout the year, the WGG organizes events that showcase girls' voices and passion for gender equality around the world."<sup>41</sup> They are dedicated to promoting the active participation of

girls as agents of change in their own lives and communities and bring that dedication to life with projects such as the International Day of the Girl, the Girls Tribunal on Violence, and by including girls as substantial participants at the annual United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>41</sup>

## **Appendix II: Established Toolkits, Guides, or Curricula for Engaging Girls**

The following is a list of toolkits, guides, and curricula that offer insight on how to engage girls. Though some of the resources are focused on youth, rather than girls specifically, they each hold valuable information on how to achieve meaningful girl engagement with an organization, program, or project.

[Adolescent and Youth Participation: Adults Get Ready!](#) by The Commonwealth Secretariat

[Child and Youth Participation Resource Guide](#) by UNICEF

[Organizational Assessment Checklist](#) by Youth on Board

[Participate: The Voice of Young People in Programmes and Policies](#) by the International Planned Parenthood Federation

[The New Girls' Movement: New Assessment Tools for Youth Programs](#) by the Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls, Health Women

[Uniting Girls to Change the World: Girl Up Advocacy Guide](#) by Girl Up

[Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation](#) by Advocates for Youth