

In Response to the United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls



The [Coalition for Adolescent Girls \(CAG\)](#), its members, and its leadership commend the United States government for the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. We laud the government and agents thereof for taking this critical step in addressing adolescent girls' complex needs and supporting the realization of their rights, wellbeing, and potential. We also applaud the U.S. government for their open communication and consultation with a variety of civil society organizations during the development of the strategy and look forward to seeing this process replicated for other governmental activities.

This strategy recognizes the fact that adolescent girls are a vulnerable, yet powerful population with unique needs. It also acknowledges that it will take a coordinated, 'whole-of-government' approach to effectively meet these needs and support adolescent girls in a variety of contexts. The development and release of this strategy sends a strong message that the United States government prioritizes adolescent girls and recognizes their role in pursuing sustainable international development. Furthermore, it addresses the wide range of adolescent girls' needs and the interplay between context and wellbeing. We at the CAG were thrilled to see adolescent girls' needs in humanitarian settings were highlighted, as were adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights, the effects of systemic inequalities, and the need for a multi-sector approach to address such inequalities. The strategy also recognizes the importance of engaging adolescent girls directly and the positive effect this can have on the efficacy, relevance, and reach of U.S. government activities.

The Administration has the authority to implement this strategy and must do so in a way that is coordinated, monitored, and effective. The strategy covers a wide range of needs and issues that adolescent girls face every day, but the goal now must be to truly turn rhetoric into action.

The White House must ensure that implementing agencies are held accountable and that their implementation processes are effective and sustainable. Each agency's implementation plan has strong elements and areas that can be improved upon throughout the implementation process. It will be crucial that the Working Group collaborate with agency representatives to ensure that these plans are carried out with all due speed and consideration. The White House must oversee the entire implementation process and establish sophisticated coordination mechanisms in order to achieve the progressive strategy objectives.

The U.S. government must ensure that this strategy is systematically infused into all the relevant agency efforts, from headquarters to the country level, and is not too heavily focused on one initiative or project, instead ensuring that the Interagency Strategy's frame for *how* to work with and for adolescent girls is implemented throughout the Strategy agencies. The inclusion of important initiatives such as Let Girls Learn and DREAMS is well placed, as they highlight critical aspects of adolescent girls' lives, such as attaining education and preventing HIV. Writing these initiatives into a whole-of-government strategy will also allow for the programs associated with them to live on beyond this Administration and for the best practices and learnings from implementation of the initiatives to be applied more broadly throughout the government. All agencies should be encouraged to work for and with adolescent girls in a range of ways, through Let Girls Learn, DREAMS, other named initiatives, and independent projects. This will help to underscore the intersecting needs of adolescent girls and to build holistic programs that complement targeted initiatives.

In addition to the above, the Coalition for Adolescent Girls recommends that the United States government do the following when implementing the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls:

- ⇒ Meaningfully engage adolescent girls in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the projects, programs, and initiatives that affect their lives;
- ⇒ Establish a leader for the Working Group to guarantee accountability and ensure that the monitoring and evaluation plan utilizes both process-oriented indicators and measurements of larger impact outcomes (e.g. attitudes regarding adolescent girls' empowerment or role in the community);
- ⇒ Maintain a focus on adolescent girls' ability to be agents of change;
- ⇒ Continually evaluate if the U.S. government initiatives are reaching the most vulnerable or hidden girls, including adolescent girls who are married, disabled, LGBTI, out of school, or adolescent refugees, and adapt initiatives as necessary so that they are inclusive of such populations;
- ⇒ Continue to consult with civil society organizations, as was done so effectively during the development of the strategy;
- ⇒ Continue to emphasize the fact that adolescent girls are a diverse group with complex, intersecting needs that affect all aspects of their lives. As the strategy clearly shows, addressing adolescent girls' needs effectively and comprehensively requires that all actors appreciate adolescent girls' diversity and potential.

To conclude, the Coalition for Adolescent Girls applauds the United States government for its collaborative approach to developing the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls and for the enlightened strategy objectives and implementation plans. While we do see areas upon which the government may improve during implementation, we are heartened to know that the U.S. government understands and prioritizes the needs and rights of adolescent girls. CAG members and leadership look forward to partnering during the implementation of this strategy and to achieving a brighter future for adolescent girls around the world.

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