I KNOW.
I WANT.
I DREAM.

GIRL INSIGHTS REPORT

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) works to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. To accomplish this, ICRW works with partners in the public and private sectors and civil society to conduct empirical research, build capacity and advocate for evidence-based practical ways to change policies and programs.

2CV is a research agency that gives people a voice so they can influence the world around them. 2CV designs research to help change happen; using innovative, immersive methodologies, and sensitivity for people and cultures, to uncover inspiring truths. 2CV works with NGO, public and private organizations to explore opportunities for change.

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FOREWORD

In 2009, ICRW published *Girls Speak: A New Voice in Global Development* as the fourth report of the *Girls Count* report series. This report synthesized girls' voices from around the world and argued that girls' insights are crucial to designing effective global development policies. The report called the world to action by:

I.   Listening to girls, learning about their aspirations and engaging them in decision-making processes.
II.   Involving families, teachers and traditional leaders as girl champions.
III.   Providing safe and inclusive community spaces where girls can develop and raise their voices.
IV.   Giving girls public platforms to amplify their voices.
V.   Changing social norms that stifle girls' voices.

Four years later, as the international community is poised to develop and implement the next global development agenda, we have built on these recommendations. Earlier this year, researchers supported by the Nike Foundation asked more than five hundred girls from fourteen countries to share their insights and perspectives with global decision-makers.

The girls were eager to share their ideas and opinions with the global community. Describing the greatest challenges and opportunities they face in their daily lives, and sharing their hopes and dreams, they articulated the changes that they want to see in their homes, schools, communities and societies. They reminded us that they are still not being heard, despite repeated promises from decision makers at all levels to listen and value their insights. And they explained the consequences of our failure to listen: girls are the future, and any policies that do not include them risk losing the potential they represent, making our work harder and moving success farther out of reach.

This report summarizes the voices of these five hundred girls, which we are issuing as a challenge for everyone to do more for the future women of this world. And to do it now.

Today, there are about six hundred million adolescent girls in the world: six hundred million lives, six hundred million dreams, six hundred million voices. Six hundred million chances to create a better world than the one we live in today.

Five hundred of these girls are speaking directly to us. Will we listen?

Sarah Kambou
President
International Center for Research on Women

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

ABOUT ICRW

For nearly 40 years, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) has been the premier applied research institute focused on women and girls. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., and with regional offices in South Asia and Africa, ICRW provides evidence-based research to inform programs and policies that help alleviate poverty, promote gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls. Corporations, foundations, governments, multilateral and bilateral institutions, civil society organizations and research institutions partner with ICRW's team of research and gender experts to break down barriers and help women and girls achieve their full potential. ICRW's focus areas include adolescent girls, agriculture and food security, economic empowerment, HIV and AIDS, population and reproductive health, violence, and other emerging issues.

Learn more about ICRW and its work at www.icrw.org.

ABOUT 2CV

2CV is an unconventional name for a research agency that doesn't adhere to convention. Established in 1989, 2CV have spent more than 20 years working to help understand people's current lives and future aspirations. 2CV works with a range of public and private sector clients across the globe from offices in America, Europe and Asia. 2CVs core focus is on primary qualitative and quantitative research. We specialise in talking to people, asking the right questions and listening to what they say. Our research is designed to help change happen. We approach every project with sensitivity for the people and cultures we are researching. We deliver innovative, immersive methodologies that uncover inspiring truths to help our NGO, public and private sector clients better understand the needs, challenges and opportunities for change that exist in people's lives.

Learn more about 2CV and their work at www.2cv.com.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In the last two decades, many stakeholders in the global human rights and development field have come to realize that the 250 million adolescent girls living in poverty have unique needs that are not being met by current policies and programs. Over this time, a diverse group of activists, researchers, donors, policymakers, program implementers and adolescent girls themselves have helped to raise awareness of their needs, as well as their vast potential. Today, we have a new opportunity to ensure that adolescent girls are equipped with the rights and opportunities they need to help make the world more healthy, secure and just.

At the dawn of the new millennium, the nations of the world signed on to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which defined a set of global targets to eradicate extreme poverty and promote education, gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and good governance. The specific needs of adolescent girls were primarily addressed under Goal 3: "Promote gender equality and empower women," which articulated a specific target to, "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015." Thirteen years later, the results are decidedly mixed: gender parity in primary education has been reached in many countries, but tens of millions of girls of primary school age are still not attending school, and a significant gap remains between boys and girls in secondary school attainment in most regions. Moreover, girls continue to face multiple challenges in the forms of poverty, violence, forced marriage, poor mental and physical health, maternal mortality, legal disenfranchisement and social isolation. These challenges resonate beyond their direct impact on 250 million girls; families and communities simply cannot thrive when so many girls are not healthy, safe or empowered during their passage between childhood and adulthood.

As the end point of the MDGs draws near, leaders of governments, multilateral institutions and civil society groups are convening to assess the world's progress and establish priorities for the next set of global development goals. The needs and rights of adolescent girls must take a more prominent role in these goals. Without girls' full participation in the social, economic and cultural life of their communities, global development goals will continue to be elusive.

KEY FINDINGS FROM POST-2015 ADOLESCENT GIRL CONSULTATIONS

In 2013, a multi-country research effort was initiated to ensure that girls' voices would guide the global development agenda. Implemented by the research firm 2CV, in close collaboration with local research partners and NGOs, the goal of the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations was to create a platform for girls to voice their unique insights, opinions and ideas. More than five hundred girls, ages 10–19, representing the poorest and most vulnerable of their communities, participated in consultation groups

spread through fourteen countries. In the form of interactive workshops, these girls shared their greatest challenges and hopes, and informed the world's decision makers what should be done differently.

Their diverse voices have been summarized into ten themes, which are categorized into three overarching categories in this report: identity; environment; assets and opportunities.

Girls' Identity: In every workshop, girls of all ages discussed challenges related to their biological, legal and social identity as girls, and how these challenges affected them physically, mentally and emotionally. Their identities are shaped by how they see themselves, and how they are viewed, counted and treated by their families, communities and governments. Girls described the restrictive roles and expectations others have for them, which often includes marriage before they are ready. The girls' sense of their value to others in the community shapes their perceptions of themselves and their opportunities. Despite these challenges, girls' hopes and dreams are not limited by others' narrow expectations of them: they passionately express their commitment to their communities and countries. They want to contribute and to be recognized as people with value and worth. They want to be involved in the choices that affect them, especially about their education, role in the home, and when and whom to marry.

Girls' Environments: Girls' lives and opportunities are shaped by their social and physical environments. Girls reported that the emotional, social and financial support of families and community members can equip them with the confidence and resources to seek opportunities, and the lack of such support proves to be an enormous barrier. Girls reported that their physical environment—including the accessibility of supportive people, safe spaces, key institutions and natural resources—shapes their mental and physical health, and their opportunities. Many also described living with the threat of violence in their homes and communities, and their doubts about the capacity of the police, legal and justice systems to protect them or to punish perpetrators. Girls expressed that they want to feel safe in their homes and communities, and they want better living conditions for their families. They also expressed their pride in their communities, and their deep desire to contribute solutions to the problems that they face.

Girls' Assets and Opportunities: Girls need and want opportunities and assets that can improve their lives in the present, while also preparing them for a healthier and more secure adulthood. Unfortunately, girls expressed that they still lack many of the most basic human assets critical for health and empowerment. Health was raised frequently in the consultations, as the difficulty of accessing healthcare services was a major concern. They also spoke about how traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage hurt and constrain them. They also expressed emotional hardships, including feelings of sadness, isolation, low self-esteem and even trauma. While many of the younger girls expressed great optimism for their futures, girls in their middle or later adolescence spoke of doubts and fears about what the future would hold. Ultimately, girls wanted to be happier, emotionally resilient and to feel supported by those around them.

"Of all topics raised, the girls discussed the importance of education most frequently and passionately."

Of all topics raised, the girls discussed the importance of education most frequently and passionately. Girls spoke about education as a channel for accessing opportunities, although they still faced many obstacles to accessing and completing a quality education. They also discussed frustrations with the quality of their own education. Girls of all ages in every country expressed the desire for more education, explaining that it extends their childhoods, protects them from harm and gives them an opportunity to develop the skills and assets to be productive and empowered adults and citizens.

IMPLICATIONS

There is an urgent need for legal and policy standards that are explicitly designed to respond to girls' unique needs and vulnerabilities, while investing in campaigns and programs to change harmful gender norms. Girls' environments must be made safer, healthier and more supportive. Furthermore, girls have knowledge and ideas that can transform their environments, if they are provided with the space, support and resources to share and implement them.

Girls' physical and mental health and education—including their preparation for employment—are fundamental human assets that must receive the utmost attention by global policymakers. Their physical and mental health is fundamental and must be protected and nurtured. Their education—from childhood all the way through their adolescence—must be fostered as a channel for acquiring not only knowledge, but also critical thinking skills, social competencies and exposure to new ideas and opportunities. During adolescence, girls should be provided with the information, training and skills needed for financial literacy and in preparation for future employment. All of these are fundamental components of sustainable development goals.

GIRL DECLARATION

Today, as global decision makers assess MDG progress and begin charting a path for the post-2015 world, it is clear that the needs and rights of girls must be prioritized. The Girl Declaration consolidates input from two parallel efforts: the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations, a series of workshops with more than 500 adolescent girls living in poverty in fourteen countries around the world, and a Technical Working Group composed of experts and advocates from a range of disciplines and institutions.

The Girl Declaration—written with girls, for girls—prioritizes adolescent girls' voices and needs, and is intended to directly inform preparation of the post-2015 development agenda. The declaration includes guiding principles—along with recommended goals and measurable targets—to give decision-makers and global leaders critical input to help guide action and investment, in order to maximize impact on the lives of girls in poverty. The goals in the Girl Declaration include the following:

GOAL 1—EDUCATION
Adolescent girls reach adulthood with relevant skills and knowledge to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

GOAL 2—HEALTH
Adolescent girls have access to safe, age-appropriate health and nutrition information and services, and possess the confidence they need to make healthy transitions to adulthood.

GOAL 3—SAFETY
Adolescent girls are free from violence and exploitation and are supported by enforced laws, strong and adequately resourced child protection systems and their communities.

GOAL 4—ECONOMIC SECURITY
Adolescent girls know how to build and protect their economic assets and transition to adulthood with the skills, including technical and vocational, needed to earn a safe and productive income. Governments, communities and the private sector respect and uphold girls' economic rights.

GOAL 5—CITIZENSHIP
Adolescent girls have equal access to services, opportunities, legal rights and personal freedom, and thus are able to fully participate as citizens of their communities and countries.

After years of progress, we have arrived at a pivotal moment in the human rights and development field. The health, economic security, educational attainment and social inclusion of girls are now widely recognized as bellwethers for the rest of society. We must now move from recognition to action by ensuring that the next set of development goals includes a deliberate, intensive and multifaceted strategy to reach adolescent girls. In order to ensure that the targets are met, adolescent girls must be equipped to lead the way toward a better world.

INTRODUCTION

Listen to what I say. It's important.
—Brazil, age 16 to 19

Girls born in the year 2000, the year the Millennium Declaration was signed, are now adolescents. Many are better off than their mothers and grandmothers were because of investments in poverty alleviation, health and education. But far too many still live in poor, unsafe and insecure environments, most often because of conflict, displacement, chronic poverty and gender discrimination. We have an opportunity to change this situation, to ensure that today's generation of adolescent girls, and those who follow them, are accessing the rights, resources and support that they need to make healthy, safe and productive transitions to adulthood.

While girls have always made significant contributions to their households and communities around the world, these contributions have often gone unnoticed and unsupported by global development actors. A diverse constituency of advocates—including adolescent girls themselves—has insisted that their unique challenges be recognized. Now there is more acknowledgment of girls' rights and needs, and a better understanding of opportunities that must exist for girls to improve their lives and the environments in which they live. There is also, at long last, greater recognition that communities, governments and global development institutions have duties and obligations to protect and fulfill the rights of girls.

As practitioners and researchers around the world have learned, appreciating and incorporating the insights of adolescent girls improves development programs and practice. Participatory research with and by girls improves idea generation and the development of programs and services that are most relevant to their needs.[1] Participation by adolescent girls in policy formulation and implementation promotes the relevance and effectiveness of policy investments. Research on female leadership points to promising impacts on a range of economic and social outcomes when girls and women are engaged as not just beneficiaries, but as leaders, in development programs.[2]

Now, there is an urgent need to move from recognition to action. As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approaches, global leaders are debating content for the next framework of sustainable development. Earth currently boasts the largest generation of youth in history—forty-three percent of the global population.[3] Migration, rapid urbanization and climate change will only

exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities as Earth's population swells to nearly 10 billion by 2050. At the same time, noting that the majority of impoverished people are female, the development community has acknowledged that gender equality can be a central driver of development success—or the lack thereof, a symptom of its failure. Indeed, UN Women's synthesis report on inequalities lists gender-based discrimination as "the single most widespread driver of inequalities in today's world."[4]

With demographic trends pointing toward a younger, more crowded planet, it stands to reason that our global dialogue on gender equality and development must expand from primarily discussing the status of women to one that distinguishes and prioritizes both the immediate rights and needs, as well as the future potential, of the world's girls. In addition to outlining goals on gender equality, specific objectives and targets must be outlined that reflect the special circumstances of girls in particular. Child marriage, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence and exploitation in schools, and girls' inheritance and property rights are among the many issues that directly affect girls and the future development agenda.

The Girl Declaration outlines the call to action for girls in the post-2015 development framework. This report outlines the context and justifications for the Girl Declaration, consolidating the collective voices of adolescent girls from the developing world with a summary of evidence from relevant literature from sociology, anthropology, epidemiology and economics. Beginning with an overview of the significance of adolescence and a summary of milestones in the field up to this point, we then describe the background of the Girl Declaration, focusing on the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations, a series of workshops with more than 500 adolescent girls living in poverty in fourteen countries around the world. The voices of girls have been consolidated into ten themes, which are organized into three categories: girls' identity, girls' environments and girls' assets and opportunities.

The report contextualizes the ten themes by first summarizing evidence from the literature, then providing an overview of "what girls think" and "changes girls want to see," and finally highlighting the main implications of what girls think and want for the next global development agenda. The conclusion connects the voices of the girls to the Girl Declaration and the framework for the next set of global development goals.
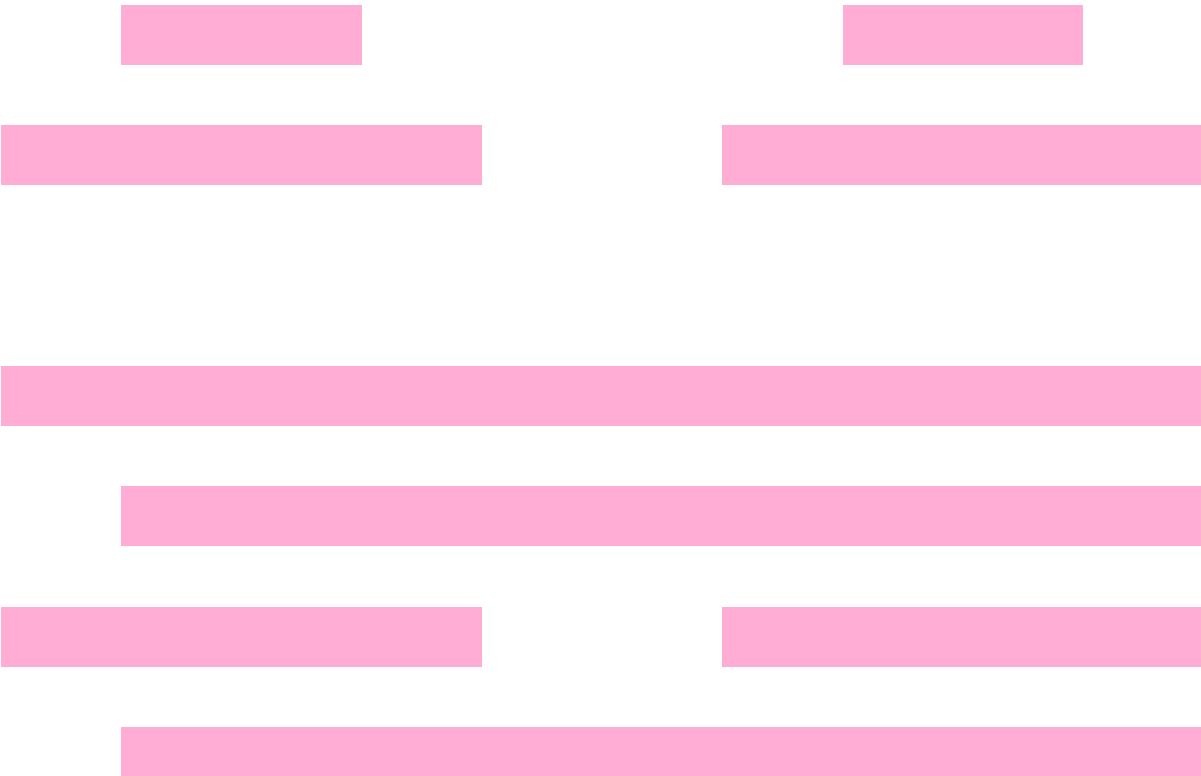
BACKGROUND

| A | **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ADOLESCENCE** |

Fundamentally, adolescence is a period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10–19.[5] There are close to six hundred million girls in this age range in the world today, comprising about 8.5 percent of the total global population.[6] This population includes 250 million adolescent girls living on less than two dollars a day. In the developing world, where poverty levels are highest, the proportion of the total population comprised of adolescent girls is even higher.

Adolescence is a period of significant biological and social transitions. Across the world, the period of adolescence is lengthening due to both biological and social factors—earlier onset of puberty, especially for girls, and later average age of marriage and first birth.[7] However, for girls in the developing world, many of these transitions—especially marriage and parenting—still occur early in adolescence. What happens to girls during these critical years of development can have lifelong repercussions. During adolescence, physical and emotional health, education, social support networks and personal security can all contribute to determining a girl's future capacity as a spouse, parent, worker and citizen.

The needs of adolescents are complex, dynamic and diverse. The developmental status and needs of youths from the ages of ten to fourteen are considerably different from those ages fifteen to nineteen. From ten to fourteen, physical and sexual development commences—about 12–18 months earlier for girls than boys, on average.[8] Socially, many other changes begin to occur, including a heightened awareness of peer group opinion and perceptions of differences between genders. Girls often face more rapid changes and have less access to information and support than boys. Late adolescence encompasses the time period between ages fifteen to nineteen. During this period, perceived differences between gendered social roles tend to magnify and solidify. Girls in this phase find themselves at higher risk of depression, gender-based discrimination and abuse.[9] While this should be a stage when "adolescents make their way into the world of work or further education, settle on their own identity and world view and start to engage actively in shaping the world around them,"[10] for many girls, this time is characterized by early an assumption of adult responsibilities, lost opportunities and diminished hopes.

Girls' biological and social transitions pose a number of unique challenges to them as they mature— challenges exacerbated in contexts of poverty and gender inequality. Girls face a "density of transitions" during their early adolescence, as biological and social changes unfold during a period of time that is often shorter for girls than for boys.[11] Moreover, adolescence has different social meanings and functions

in different contexts. In some places, a 14-year-old girl may be expected to attend school and prepare for a future job. In other places, she would already be married and preparing for motherhood. Girls often face multiple, compounding forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Girls face greater marginalization if they are from ethnic, racial or religious minority groups, or are living in conflict-affected or remote rural areas, urban slums or on the street, or have become married, pregnant, out-of-school, displaced, disabled or employed in insecure jobs.

B NOW IS THE MOMENT: BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR THE ADOLESCENT GIRL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

As awareness has grown of the significant impact adolescence has on individual development, so has appreciation for the role adolescent populations play in the social, economic and political health of societies at large. Because adolescent girls, in particular, have been left out of traditional human rights and development efforts, there is a need for intensified, targeted and multisectoral investments to support the young, female population in the developing world. In the last two decades—particularly the last ten years—adolescent girl experts and advocates have emerged from a number of diverse institutions and geographies.

In recognition of the fact that adolescent girls face unique challenges in accessing their rights, advocates and practitioners helped ensure that young people were highlighted prominently on the global stage at two key global conferences nearly two decades ago: the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. These conferences enshrined a global commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and all young people. They also sparked new programs oriented toward women and young people, including adolescent girls. As more programs were developed to reach adolescent populations, there was a growing awareness of the multifaceted and integrated needs girls had, particularly those involving their sexual and reproductive health, legal status and rights, education and economic opportunities.

In 2000, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which identified eight global targets to be reached by the year 2015. Adolescent girls were featured in Goal 3: *Promote gender equality and empower women*, specifically under the target, "eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015."[i] The contributions that adolescent girls could make to the other goals were largely overlooked in the MDG framework until 2005, when the MDG Task Force on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women recommended a special focus on adolescents, stating that investments in girls can "accelerate progress toward several of the Millennium Development Goals."[12]

The last decade has witnessed a substantial increase in the literature on girls' need and the benefits of investing in them. Plan International's "State of the World's Girls" report series,[13] the Coalition for Adolescent Girls' "Girls Count" series,[14] UNICEF's 2011 annual "State of the World's Children" and its 2012 "Progress for Children: A report card on adolescents"[15] are a few of the seminal reports that have been released in the last ten years to comprehensively describe the multifaceted nature of girls' needs and potential. The World Bank conducted a multi-country analysis to quantify the potential benefits of investing in girls, projecting that closing gaps between girls and boys in the areas of education, economic activity and health would increase national economic growth and well-being.[16]

Inspired by the evidence that adolescent girls had multifaceted needs that were not being addressed by global development efforts, new partnerships formed across sectors and institutions. In 2007, the UN established the Adolescent Girls Task Force to link efforts across

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[i] Adolescent fertility rate, a measure specific to adolescent girls, was later added as an indicator for MDG 5B ("Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health"), in recognition of the greater risks that adolescents face in pregnancy and childbirth than older women.

six of its agencies. New partnerships among philanthropists, corporations and non-governmental organizations formed to demonstrate that investment in adolescent girls could accelerate poverty eradication efforts. An alliance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors formed the Coalition for Adolescent Girls in 2005 to provide a platform to drive new and existing programs, policies and investments. In 2008, the Girl Effect was created to inspire a movement that is about "making girls visible and changing their social and economic dynamics by providing them with specific, powerful and relevant resources."[17]

More organizations, and even financial institutions, began to make targeted investments in adolescent girls. The World Bank Group launched the Adolescent Girls Initiative in 2008, a public-private partnership to promote the transition of adolescent girls and young women from school to productive employment and economic empowerment.[18] In 2009, the World Economic Forum held its first plenary session focused on adolescent girls, highlighting the potential of female advancement to reduce poverty, even in the midst of a global recession.[19]

Ever more ambitious and multifaceted global commitments for adolescents have been made over the last two years, and the girl agenda has increasingly taken prominence in global gatherings and commitments. At the 45th United Nations Commission on Population and Development in 2012, "Adolescents and Youth" were the theme for the first time.[20] The first UN International Day of the Girl Child was launched in 2012, raising the awareness of the multifaceted needs of girls, and featuring significant commitments by UN agencies, private donors and national governments.

Adolescent girls themselves are progressively taking a more prominent role in setting global policy agenda and leading social movements. Each year, the G(irls) 20 Summit convenes girls and young women from G20 countries to influence the G20 leaders. In 2012, ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Youth Forum became the first UN-mandated process to be led by global youth, for global youth—resulting in a youth-centered set of development recommendations that were delivered to the UN Secretary General. An adolescent girl addressed the open debate of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2013. Around the world, powerful girl leaders and change agents have recently emerged in such figures as Malala Yousafzai, an advocate for girls' education in Pakistan, and Nada al-Ahdal, a young Yemeni girl whose video testimony of escaping a forced marriage went viral. Overcoming oppression and violence, these girls have become high-profile champions for a global movement. Girls know their rights; they are demanding change, and governments are starting to listen.

The momentum has accelerated over the last two decades, and today, it is clear that the next generation of development goals currently being discussed must have adolescent girls at the forefront. There is already some evidence that the focus on gender equality from the MDGs will endure, and may be strengthened by an increased focus on girls' rights and opportunities. The two most prominent reports already published to outline a proposed framework—by the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons convened to advise the Secretary-General on a post-2015 framework, and by the Secretary-General himself—have both included a goal for female empowerment, including new and specific provisions for girls. These include ending child marriage, preventing and eliminating violence against girls, protecting reproductive rights and ensuring girls have access to educational opportunities and sexual and reproductive healthcare. These are critically important goals, but they only begin to lay the groundwork for an agenda that truly recognizes and prioritizes the voices and needs of adolescent girls.

AMPLIFYING GIRLS' VOICES: THE GIRL DECLARATION

In order to finally put girls at the center of global development efforts, girls and girl champions from around the world have come together to articulate a bold agenda known as the Girl Declaration. The Girl Declaration—written with girls, for girls—prioritizes adolescent girls' voices and needs, and is intended to directly inform development of the post-2015 development agenda. The Declaration includes guiding principles, along with recommended goals and measurable targets, to give decision makers and global leaders critical information to help guide action and investment, in order to maximize impact on the lives of girls in poverty. By the 2013 International Day of the Girl, more than one hundred organizations and individuals had signed on to the Girl Declaration.

The Girl Declaration consolidates input from two parallel efforts: a Technical Working Group composed of experts and advocates from a range of disciplines and institutions; and the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations, which convened more than 500 adolescent girls living in poverty in fourteen countries around the world. Thus, the Declaration arises both from months of research and decades of collective expertise.

A   TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

In 2013 experts from 25 organizations, including NGOs, research institutions, donors and multilateral institutions were convened to discuss what they see as the main challenges and opportunities in development, and how girls can affect and be affected by these challenges. The group met several times over the course of the year—in person and via teleconference—to discuss and prioritize the main issues that they saw affecting girls. They also gave feedback to the research done via the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations.

B   POST-2015 ADOLESCENT GIRL CONSULTATION

In 2013, a multi-country research effort was initiated to ensure that girls' voices would guide the global development agenda. Implemented by research firm 2CV, in close collaboration with local research partners and NGOs, the goal of the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultation was to create a platform for girls to voice their unique insights, opinions and ideas. The initiative's objectives were

twofold: to create a forum for consulting girls on their hopes, aspirations and challenges; and to capture authentic voices of young people living in poverty in 2013.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

During 2013, 2CV and partners interviewed 508 girls from fourteen countries— Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Rwanda (see Table 1). Participants ranged in age from ten to nineteen, and were recruited to represent the most vulnerable girls in their communities—often those with parents unemployed or working in manual labor, and who missed school regularly, bore responsibility for caring for family members, and had limited access to healthcare and other resources. The girls were selected to represent various literacy levels, urban and rural populations, and different religions, family sizes, and marital and childbearing statuses. Most of the girls were living on less than two dollars per day (in Mexico, Brazil and Islamabad, Pakistan—where income levels are higher—girls could be living on six dollars a day). In some countries (Brazil, DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan), girls had previous involvement with development programs and initiatives.

During the recruitment phase, NGOs and local research partners reached out to communities for help identifying girls who met the criteria, then approached parents or guardians to seek permission for their daughters to join the study. 2CV's local partners also identified potential workshop locations that would be safe and comfortable for the girls—usually schools, town halls or the research partners' offices—then worked to ensure privacy during discussions and, where possible, outdoor areas for use during breaks. The chosen sites were usually a short drive from the girls' communities, and secure transport was provided to ferry the girls safely to and from the workshop.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS IN POST-2015 ADOLESCENT GIRL CONSULTATIONS

Country	Number of Girls Interviewed	Age			Location			Schooling status		
		10–12	13–15	16–19	Rural	Third-tier city	Urban	In school/ falling behind	Falling behind/ out of school	Out of school/ working
Brazil	29		15	14	15		14	29		
China	45	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
DRC	32		16	16	16		16		16	16
Egypt	30		15	15	15		15	15		15
Ethiopia	32		16	16	16	16			16	16
India	65	15	35	15	15	30	20	35		30
Indonesia	45	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Kenya	43	15	15	13	15	13	15	15	15	13
Liberia	32	16	16		16	16		16	16	
Mexico	28		16	12		12	16		16	12
Nigeria	32	16	16		16		16	16	16	
Pakistan	29		15	14	15		14	15	14	
Philippines	34	18	16		16		18	18	16	
Rwanda	32		15	17			32		15	17
TOTAL	508	110	236	162	185	117	206	189	170	149

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the project, researchers carefully honored the responsibility of working with vulnerable children, requiring all partners to read, sign and adhere to a child safeguarding policy that included:

- Seeking formal parental consent for research and photography before any such activity took place.
- Allowing participants to withdraw at any time free from judgment or coercion.
- Choosing research locations that were safe and suitable for children and young people.
- Implementing a reporting and follow-up process for every consultation.

In each country, a designated Child Safety Officer was selected to log and respond to any issues that arose during the consultations. After each session, all researchers, moderators, translators and any other adults present at the workshop gathered to discuss any observations that could suggest a girl (or child) may be harmed or at risk. All such issues were followed-up with and carefully documented.

WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY[ii]

The research was designed with a number of underlying principles in mind, including:

- Giving girls a voice.
- Creating a safe space.
- Making girls feel valued.
- Capturing authentic voices of girls.
- Speaking to a large number of girls.
- Abiding by the child safeguarding policy.

Local research partners hired two female moderators and two translators fluent in the local language to facilitate each workshop. Before going into the field, the moderators and translators were briefed on the purpose of the Girl Consultations, and taken through the discussion guide, tools and safeguarding policy.

Research workshops were conducted with three different age groups of adolescent girls: 10–12, 13–15 and 16–19. Each session included approximately 16 girls. At the beginning of the workshop, moderators gathered the girls in a circle to discuss the project's purpose and the importance of their contribution as "Girl Advisors." The "Girl Advisors" were told that a charitable organization believed in the power of adolescent girls like them to change the world, and so had dispatched research teams around the globe to make sure that their needs and ideas would be taken into account by the powerful global leaders working to decide how best to invest money to help people.

2CV developed a girl-led approach to explore key issues, breaking down into groups of seven or eight girls so that each individual could have more space to air their opinions. Each group was tasked with creating a list of the main issues in girls' lives, and each girl was given a "wishes" sheet to use throughout the sessions to record their ideas, hopes and dreams. Towards the end of the workshop, girls inscribed one of these thoughts onto a special piece of wood, which would ultimately be displayed at events around the world. These wooden tags would be complemented by an audio or video recording of each girl reading her own tag, and stating her name, age and location.[iii]

[ii] For more information about the workshop structure and methodology please refer to the Girl Consultation Research Toolkit.
[iii] To see and hear girls' hopes and dreams, visit http://www.girleffect.org/2015-beyond/girls-voices/about/

The research used a range of tools to ensure a comfortable, safe, fun and girl-friendly discussion space. Creative and projective imagination techniques helped relax girls and encouraged broad thinking. These sessions included:

A perfect day: Girls were asked to imagine spending a perfect day in a place they had always wanted to visit, focusing on what the place looked like, what would happen throughout the day, how they felt, who they would be with and what they would do.

Waking up in a few years: Girls were then asked to imagine what life would be like if they went to sleep and woke up five years from now. How they would feel? What would they be doing? Who would they live with? Who would their friends be? What would represent their best hopes and worst fears?

Team exercises allowed time for collaboration. Girls were asked to bring to life a "typical" girl from their area, giving her speech bubbles to answer questions. What would she think? What would she say? What sorts of activities might she do? What does she feel? What does she care about? Who does she love?

Role-play encouraged girls to act out their experiences and attitudes in a scenario that asked them to imagine calling in to a radio show to give or ask for advice. What would they ask? How would they help others tackle issues?

Handwritten exercises encouraged time for thoughtfulness and individual consideration (with support for low-literacy levels). For example, girls were asked to inscribe on a wooden tag the most important hopes that they wanted to share with world leaders. Some girls were asked to imagine introducing the Girl Declaration to their President, and how they would explain the value of listening to input from girls.

MyWorld Survey: MyWorld is a global survey—led by the United Nations and partners—designed to capture diverse voices, priorities and views to better inform global leaders as they develop the post-2015 development agenda.[iv] The survey asks individuals which six of sixteen possible issues could make the most difference to their lives. 2CV administered the survey to girls where appropriate, and uploaded survey results to the MyWorld website.

Participants were all recognized for their contributions with a certificate. In most countries, they were also given a small gift (worth no more than $10), such as notepads, bags, scarves and thermoses. In China and Mexico, compensation was provided to cover travel time and potential loss of earnings for the older girls. Once the research was complete, each girl received a "thank you packet," including a thank you letter and a photo of the girl with her certificate.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis was conducted using thematic, iterative approaches at both the country and global levels. The first stage of analysis involved conducting an in-field download and analysis to capture thoughts and observations from all researchers, moderators, translators and local research partners immediately following each workshop. Using a similar iterative and thematic process, lead researchers in each country conducted both a country-specific post-field individual analysis based on in-field download notes, which they then reviewed and validated with local partners, and a cross-country analysis, which brought together insights from all countries. The results were then validated in two ways: First, the country-level analysis was reviewed and validated by local partners. Secondly, 2CV analyzed MyWorld Survey results to compare to findings from workshops.

[iv] http://www.myworld2015.org

FINDINGS FROM POST-2015 ADOLESCENT GIRL CONSULTATIONS

This section organizes and contextualizes the contributions of the 508 girls who participated in the consultations. First, we summarize similarities across all countries and age groups, and then describe some key differences by setting and age group. We then briefly highlight key findings by country. Main findings are presented by theme. The contributions from girls have been grouped into ten key themes, which are presented here underneath three overarching categories:

GIRLS' IDENTITY

> Legal Identity
> Social Identity
> Marriage

GIRLS' ENVIRONMENTS

> Social Support
> Local Environment
> Safety and Security

GIRLS' ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

> Health
> Emotions
> Education
> Jobs and Money

Each theme contains an overview of the background literature on this topic, then highlights "what girls think" and "changes girls want to see." Each of the three overarching categories concludes with implications for the global development field. The quotes from girls are identified only by country and age group.

A   THE VOICES OF GIRLS: KEY SIMILARITIES

GIRLS FELT STRONGLY ABOUT ISSUES AND WANTED TO BE HEARD.

Participants had strong opinions and wanted to express themselves during the sessions. They were visibly passionate about challenges they face, and expressed clear ideas about how they thought the world should change.

A girl in the 16–19 age group from Indonesia said, "I do not understand why a girl's life is valued less than a boy's. I do not think this should be the case. We should all be equal." A girl in the 13–15 age group from the DRC said, "I would like to see world leaders supporting women achieving gender equality."

The girls relished the chance to spend time with peers and discuss issues that affect them, strongly suggesting that they rarely have the opportunity or voice to do so. According to one Ethiopian girl in the 16–19 age group, "My wish is to see efforts regarding women's progress being accomplished. And I want everyone to realize that women are capable of doing everything."

GIRLS FACED SIMILAR CHALLENGES.

The girls discussed a range of issues they felt affected them disproportionately, as compared to others in their communities. Girls talked about the set pathways they were expected to follow in life. An Egyptian girl in the 16–19 age group said with frustration, "I want to go to school but I cannot because my family needs me."

Girls felt they lacked access to support and often felt helpless to make the right choices or to effect change. "People gossip if a girl visits a doctor, so parents tend to avoid it," a Pakistani girl reported, describing how she felt that she could trust very few people in her community.

THEIR COMMUNITIES SHARED SIMILAR CHALLENGES.

Girls mentioned a myriad of challenges that their communities face, many intrinsically linked to the context of living in poverty: access to basic resources like clean water, sanitation and electricity; limited assets and social capital; meager opportunities for employment; gaps in knowledge resulting from poor quality education and lack of access to information about rights and sexual health. Participants also felt certain problems affected girls in particular: the prioritization of others' needs and lack of respect for girls; the expectation that girls follow established pathways (in jobs and marriage); and the lack of support networks to help girls improve their lives.

GIRLS EXPRESSED RESPECT FOR THEIR COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY.

Many girls expressed a sense of patriotism. They talked passionately about wanting to help people in their country make progress and gain respect. These sentiments were particularly strong in countries experiencing high economic growth (contributing to feelings of increasing potential opportunity), or where a strong future vision unites the country (e.g., Rwanda, Liberia). For example, a 12-year-old girl in Liberia said, "I want to be in Liberia to make my country happy. I want to be a nurse to help children. I love to make my country happy." Girls showed pride in their local communities, but also expressed feeling a sense of shame and sadness about their levels of poverty and deprivation, and a desire for improvements. For example, a 17-year-old in DRC said, "I would like… to be part of efforts in the DRC to develop our beloved country." And a 13-year-old from India said, "I want to become a policewoman and stop female infanticide. I have to stop many different kinds of corruption. I have to fulfill the dreams of my parents. I love my India."

HOWEVER, THEY ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR COMMUNITIES COULD HINDER OPPORTUNITY.

Girls expressed pride in their local communities and talked about enjoying a sense of belonging and support. Yet, they also felt that their communities could be a hindrance to them in their lives. On the one hand, girls talked about the support, pride and identity that people in their communities provided them, as one Indonesian girl in the 10–12 age group expressed, "I know that if something happened then I could go to the community head and they would make sure it was okay."

On the other hand, girls also reported that their communities could restrict and control them with expectations and gender roles, which created an impression that they were judged more harshly than others in the community. "We cannot do anything without being judged. We have to help our communities, but they don't treat us like their sisters or wives," said one Indian girl in the 13–15 age group. A Rwandan girl in the 16–19 age group reported, "The worst thing would be if you were rejected by your neighbors or village."

GIRLS PROGRESS THROUGH ADOLESCENCE IN A SIMILAR WAY, AND 13 TO 15 YEARS OLD IS A CRITICAL TIME PERIOD.

While girls face challenges at all ages, a clear point of transition occurs as girls start puberty. Participants reported that many critical events occurred between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, from school drop-out to interest from boys to arranged marriage to pressure from parents to earn money and/or marry. A Rwandan girl in the 13–15 age group said, "When I fell behind at school, I felt bad because my family needs the money, so I quit school to help my family." Another in Ethiopia said, "Girls in this area are forced into early marriage, and I believe girls will face problems because of it. They can't take the responsibility."

B   THE VOICES AND LIVES OF GIRLS: KEY DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

The way girls talked about their communities and lives differed between urban and rural areas, with increased exposure to social and economic progress in urban populations. Communities were perceived as being more open-minded in these areas, which seemed to endow their girls with stronger aspirations to break away from tradition. For example, urban girls often had more exposure to and ideas about different career opportunities available to them. Rural girls were often less aware of opportunities to break with tradition and had less access to information and exposure to change, hence their worldview was often more limited.

There were also differences in the challenges and exposure to risk that girls faced in these areas. In urban centers, girls spoke far more about security issues that stem from living in deprived, densely-populated areas with high crime rates. They also talked of health issues affected by the poor local environment. A girl in the 10–12 age group in the Philippines said she wished authorities would "clean the river, so girls like me will not get sick, and where we live will not get flooded." In rural areas, challenges stemmed from the distance travelled to reach facilities such as school or health centers. One Indonesian girl in the 13–15 age group said, "My shoes wear out from walking to school, and then I can't go because we can't afford new shoes." In addition, rural girls felt that they were more at risk of physical dangers from family or community, as opposed to the complete strangers encountered by urban dwellers.

DIFFERENCES BY AGE

10–12: FINAL YEARS OF CHILDHOOD

Girls ages 10–12 still spoke and behaved like children, living more protected and sheltered lives, unaware of challenges that will arise

in just a few years' time. Most were still in school, though some were beginning to fall behind. At this stage, they were often surrounded by peers at school, which provided comfort and support. This age group also had less obvious differences between girls and boys. All children were encouraged to have high aspirations—dreams of being the president, a teacher, a doctor—and this optimism formed much of their outlook. Limited knowledge and real world experience meant girls aged 10-12 were somewhat naïve and ill-prepared for their futures. They were also curious about their reproductive health and bodies, but lacked access to accurate information.

13–15: PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Girls ages 13–15 highlighted their experiences during the transitional period, as they began to learn more about themselves and the harsh realities of the outside world. Girls were less certain that they would complete their education—many were falling behind or dropping out of school, often as a result of economic constraints and domestic or family responsibilities. With hopes and dreams hinging on education, and facing mounting family commitments, many girls expressed feeling as if the future were out of their control and were seeking inspiration for alternative opportunities.

Social dynamics also began to change for girls around this age. Less time in school meant more time on their own, whether out running errands or at home doing chores. This left them more vulnerable to the advances of boys and older men. Girls this age often felt unequipped to deal with such situations and were looking for advice and support.

One participant in the 13–15 age group in India noted that many girls were still children when they married, and had not yet learned how to do the things wives do, such as cooking and cleaning. "There are girls our age getting married by their families, but they are still girls. They don't know how to be wives yet," she remarked

16-18: ISOLATION AND ADULTHOOD

By ages 16–18, the majority of girls had left school, and expressed less hope of returning with each year that had passed. Those still in school were often so far behind that they had little hope of ever finishing (most 13-year-old and older girls were still in primary school). With full-time domestic responsibilities and few other opportunities, many girls were confined to the home, often in isolation.

Critically, girls in this age group seemed to be the least confident about the future. Any semblance of control they once believed they exercised over their own fate had been overshadowed by the realities of approaching adulthood. A girl in this age group from India said, "I can't imagine a perfect day. I can't imagine anything different to the life I'm living." They sought opportunities to break from the path set before them. As short-term gains become increasingly tempting, girls wanted practical advice and support on sexual health to help protect themselves and their futures.

KEY ISSUES RAISED BY GIRLS IN EACH COUNTRY

BRAZIL
Girls talked about their access to government support, which allows them to stay in school for longer. Violence and drug crime are key concerns for girls in Brazil, as well as corruption and lack of trust in police. Overall, girls are less concerned about gender inequality, but do experience prejudice and difficulties related to poverty.

CHINA
Many girls in China expressed that the government does not support them. Despite the one-child policy, many girls live in families with multiple children, which the girls believe is because families will keep trying for boys if they first have a girl. Overall, girls reported fewer physical safety concerns.
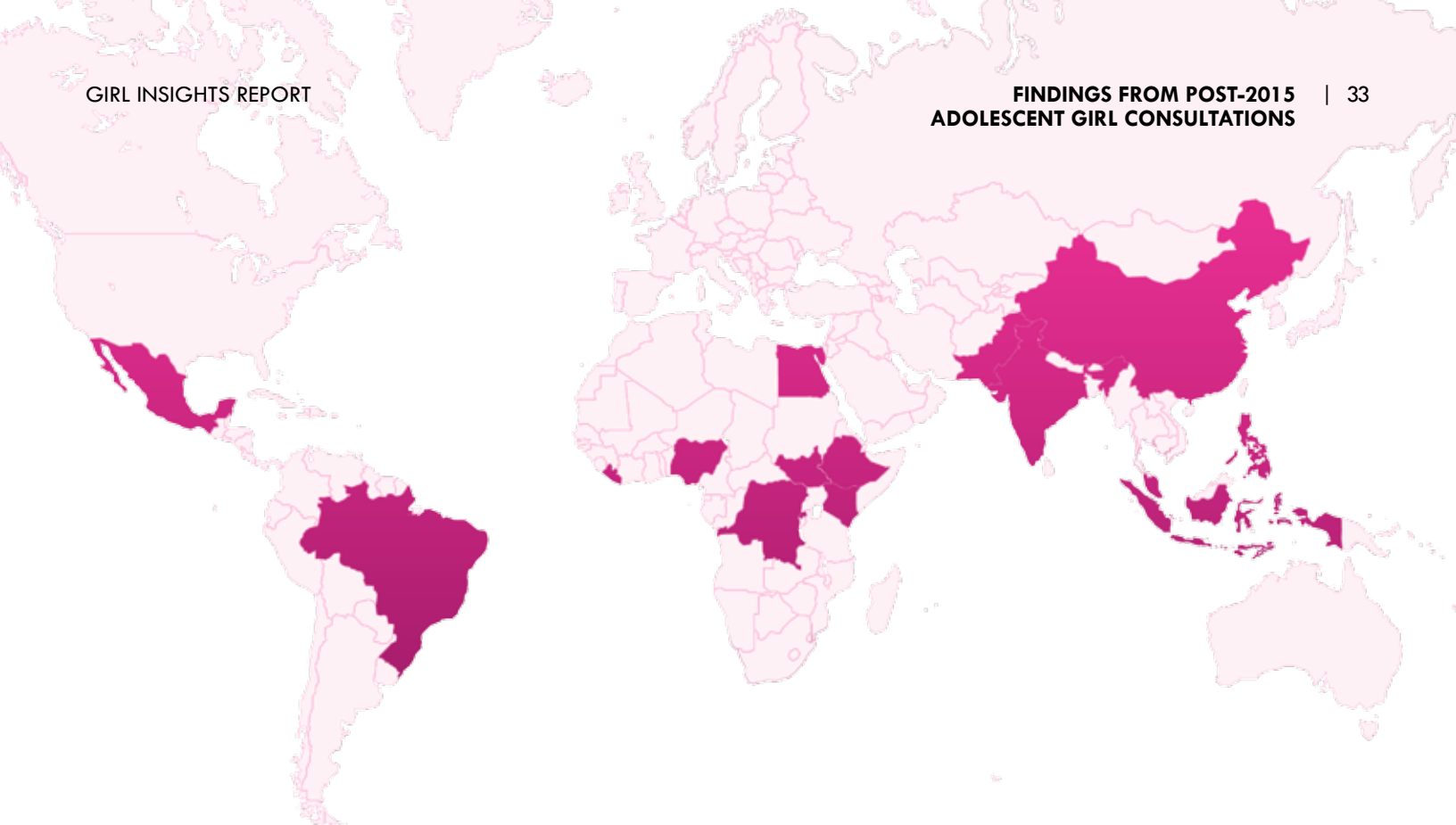
DRC

Girls still feel vulnerable due to instability in the country (especially in eastern DRC, the region where research was conducted, as there was on-going conflict at the time). Rape and physical violence are key concerns for girls. The current political situation can make it challenging for girls to move freely, hindering travel to school or health facilities. Girls also do not feel they have safe spaces where they can spend time.

EGYPT

The revolution initially gave hope to girls, but many feel that it has not delivered desired results. The poorest girls do not feel any more empowered, and often face dismal job opportunities, which is exacerbated by poor quality education. Arranged marriage and domestic abuse are also key concerns for girls in Egypt.

ETHIOPIA

Girls worry about job opportunities and feel concerned by the threat of having to migrate for work. They want access to money and opportunities, but fear leaving the safety of home. Girls have limited peer networks and often feel physically and emotionally vulnerable outside their homes.

INDIA

Girls are made to feel responsible for upholding family reputation and are often blamed by others. As a result, girls feel they are closely monitored and controlled. Girls frequently referred to the Delhi rape case, which appears to have made sexual violence a more pressing concern for Indian girls. The tradition of arranged marriage makes girls feel that they are not valued, since they will eventually have to leave their families.

INDONESIA

Girls in Indonesia worry about issues concerning state identity, especially related to being born out of wedlock and not being officially registered. As a result, girls say they are sometimes forced to enter, and remain in, unsuitable or even abusive marriages. Quality of life is much lower in urban slums, where girls face greater safety and security risks.

KENYA

Girls in Kenya have difficulty finding work, partly because of the domestic responsibilities they are expected to fulfill, but also due to the lack of job opportunities available. Girls from some communities voiced concerns about early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), while others expressed feeling greater individual freedom. Violence and rape were discussed widely.

LIBERIA

Girls in Liberia talked about rape and high post-conflict crime rates. Girls feel inspired by Liberia's female president, who gives them hope for their future.

MEXICO

Girls in Mexico talked about their desire to seek opportunities

abroad. They feel that the cost of living is rising and they are struggling to keep up. The criminal culture in Mexico and related safety and security issues are major concerns for girls.

NIGERIA

Girls feel a lack of basic resources, even in urban areas, negatively impacts their health and economic opportunities. Early marriage is a key issue, especially among Muslim girls in northern Nigeria. Widespread violence and rape are a particular concern for all girls. Girls feel that poor quality education, especially in a system where teachers impose fees, limits access to training and future employment.

PAKISTAN

Girls feel that their behavior is restricted both to preserve family reputation and to ensure their safety. Girls talked about the burden of household chores and chores in school limiting their access to education and job opportunities. Monsoon season can cause waste to flood their homes, creating significant health concerns.

PHILIPPINES

Girls expressed their difficulties talking about—or even gathering information on—topics such as sexual health and puberty, which are considered taboo. Girls also feel that schools are stretched beyond capacity, and that natural disasters hamper infrastructure progress.

RWANDA

Girls feel that females are supported and recognized by the president and municipal governments. However, they often have limited inspiration and opportunities for jobs. Though teen pregnancy and early marriage represent key issues in Rwanda, they were rarely discussed during the consultations. Girls also feel their communities are still recovering from the genocide.

GIRLS IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS SPOKE OF GREATER ACCESS TO CRUCIAL SUPPORT.

Researchers spoke to a number of girls involved in either NGO or government development programs, which ranged from "safe space" initiatives, to sexual and reproductive health education, to vocational training for girls. There were some notable differences between those who were a part of development programs and those that were not.

Overall, girls involved in these programs reported having greater access to support in a number of crucial ways. For example, one girl in Pakistan talked of a water pump provided by Plan Pakistan, which gave her neighborhood access to clean water. Other girls from Pakistan mentioned contact with Community Health Educators, who taught them about health and hygiene, HIV and AIDS, hepatitis and other topics. With this knowledge, the girls in turn educated their peers and spread awareness. Girls also valued opportunities to tap into support networks through these programs. Girls valued the access to those who worked on programs (for information, advice and support), and the time they were able to spend with other girls. While those out of programs benefited from broad initiatives implemented by NGOs and governments, such as food subsidies or education campaigns, they did not feel that they benefited from ongoing and targeted support the way that girls who were involved in program did.

C	**FINDINGS BY THEME**

GIRLS' IDENTITY

The concept of girls' identities resounded in all of the consultations. In every workshop, girls of all ages discussed the challenges related to their biological, legal and social identity *as girls*, and how these challenges affected them physically, mentally and emotionally. Their identities are shaped by how they see themselves, and how they are seen, counted and treated by their families, communities and governments. The concept of identity is entwined with the concept of value. That girls are often valued less than boys is evident at two levels: At the level of states and nations, official policy fails to recognize girls or discriminates against them. Within families and communities, gendered social norms relegate girls to a narrow range of options and opportunities. A girl's awareness of her value to others in the community shapes her opportunities, not only in a practical sense, but also in a personal one, as outside views can impact her perception of self and diminish self-confidence in her own capabilities. As a result, these perceptions have profound implications for her physical and emotional well-being.

This section encapsulates three interrelated themes: legal identity, social identity and marriage. Marriage has both legal and social implications, but stands alone in this report, because girls identified it as a key concern that has singular importance throughout their lives.

LEGAL IDENTITY

BACKGROUND

Like all people, girls are born with universal and unalienable human rights. However, their access to those rights may be compromised throughout their lives, with particular severity during adolescence. While adolescent girls' rights are guaranteed by a number of existing human rights agreements, including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), none of these agreements explicitly acknowledge the special challenges girls face in accessing their rights. Neither adult women nor children, girls are often overlooked by legal frameworks.

One essential human right is that of a legal identity. A birth certificate, documenting the name, age and nationality of the child, is the foundation of a legal identity, which then establishes entitlements to the rights and services provided by the state. As many as half of all births in less-developed countries go unregistered, and in some countries a disproportionate number of those children are female.[21] In 2004, 530,000 unregistered people were identified in China, more than seventy percent of whom were female.[22] In regions where most births are unregistered, the disparity between birth registration for girls and boys is greatest.

Lack of a legal identity has lasting effects throughout the course of a girl's life. For example, without a birth certificate, girls often cannot be registered for school, sit for exams, receive immunizations or claim rights to inheritance, social services or legal protections.[23] The lack of identity is particularly problematic for marginalized girls, such as those out-of-school, migrants, members of indigenous groups or ethnic minorities, the disabled, trafficking victims and girls displaced by humanitarian crises. These groups are all less likely to have formal documentation or certification, making it more difficult for them to access services. When states legally recognize—and count, plan for and budget for—all girls within their borders, officials are better able to protect their rights and respond to their needs.

Girls face many other forms of legal discrimination, such as: unequal provisions regarding marital status, including consent to marriage and divorce, as well as polygamy; personal status and citizenship; the right to own and inherit property; mobility; employment and physical integrity.[24] Different laws often apply to boys and girls regarding age of marriage, such as in India, where the minimum age of marriage is twenty-one for boys and eighteen for girls. In Egypt, the new constitution has proposed lowering the legal age of marriage to fourteen for girls. Even laws considered to be gender-neutral are often not actually neutral in practice, with implementation having a discriminatory effect on women and girls. Governments may fail to make special considerations for women and girls, such as protections from violence and exploitation, or an expansion of opportunity through quotas, affirmative action or positive discrimination mechanisms. Those states that do draft and codify gender-equitable laws may still fail to adequately enforce or implement them.[25]

In many countries, girls are not legally authorized to access basic health and legal services—or even to make decisions about their own lives—without spousal or parental consent.[26] Legal protections matter for girls and young women. The prevalence of domestic violence is lower in countries with laws designed to prevent it, where fewer people—both men and women—believe such behavior is acceptable.[27] Legal rights and protections can help shape girls' beliefs about what is acceptable and possible for their own lives in terms of achievement, health and safety. Similarly, legal standards set a normative model for what is and is not acceptable across society.[28]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls expressed that their societies fail to recognize their personhood or value. Many girls talked about their lack of state identity, with many lacking ID cards or birth certificates, living in areas "uncounted" by the government and working in illegal jobs. According to one girl in the 13–15 age group in Pakistan, "Most people aren't born in a hospital and it's too expensive to get a birth certificate." A girl in the 10–12 age group from the Philippines said, "I don't have [a] birth certificate, I was not born in hospital, I would like to get one as it helps with jobs."

The lack of identity contributed to a feeling of inferiority or even invisibility. A girl in the 13–15 year age group from China said, "The government doesn't care about us here – they don't come to help or check up on us." Many girls talked about how their lack of identity and protection from the government increased their feeling of insecurity. Girls worried that harm against them may go unnoticed and justice may not be served, since they lacked official identities. Legal identity issues were particularly evident in China, DRC, Indonesia, Mexico and Pakistan.

Girls expressed great respect for their communities and pride in their countries. However, many girls also thought that this respect was not repaid, and that girls were not acknowledged by communities or government.

Girls also expressed their feelings of being treated as inferior to boys. A girl in the 16–19 age group in Indonesia said, "I do not understand why a girl's life is valued less than a boy's."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls wanted respect and recognition from others. First, they want legal recognition in the form of birth certificates. A girl in the 13–15 age group in Indonesia stated, "I want girls to always have birth certificates… No matter what." A Pakistani girl in the 16–19 age group said, "I want to abolish negative discrimination because we girls and women are not inferior to anybody else."

Many girls talked about wanting to feel like "someone" in society. "I want girls to help develop the leadership of our country," one Liberian girl in the 13–15 age group said. Another Liberian girl in the 13–15 age group stated, "My wish is for girls to learn efficiently and play more roles in the leadership of our country."

Girls also said they would feel safer if they were "counted" by people and the government. Girls also expressed desire for the freedom to make their own choices and move around their local area without risk of harm to their reputation. "I want to live freely. I don't want people to dictate what I do. No one to control us; no one to hit us; no one to tell us what clothes to wear," said one Egyptian girl in the 13–15 age group.

Ultimately, girls felt greater recognition and respect would give them a stronger sense of self-worth and lead to more opportunities. One girl in the 16–19 age group in Ethiopia stated, "I want to be an advocate for women so that they do not feel inferior."

SOCIAL IDENTITY

BACKGROUND

Girls' identities are inextricably linked to the roles that they are expected to play in society—roles rooted in gender norms. According to the World Health Organization:

> Gender norms are powerful, pervasive values and attitudes about gender-based social roles and behaviours that are deeply embedded in social structures... They ensure the maintenance of social order, punishing or sanctioning deviance from those norms, interacting to produce outcomes which are frequently inequitable, and dynamics that are often risky for women and girls.[29]

Gendered social norms usually relegate girls and women to domestic and reproductive roles over public and productive roles.[30] Such limitations have a direct negative effect on girls. Girls may be kept out of school or have limited time for schoolwork because of domestic duties, such as taking care of children or sick family members, doing chores or contributing to petty businesses that raise money for their household.[31] As they mature, adolescent girls take on an ever greater burden of caregiving responsibilities. Whether fetching fuel for cooking or caring for dependents, girls of poor families work inside the home to subsidize the household economy.[32] Girls may not be allowed to work outside the home, but if they are, their options are largely concentrated in the informal sector, with low pay and minimal job security.[33] What little money they earn usually goes to their family. In some cases, their wages are used to pay for their brothers' school fees.[34]

Girls confined to domestic roles also experience social isolation, limited mobility and less exposure to important health information. As they progress through adolescence, girls begin to experience resistance from their parents to activities outside the home and towards their participation in male-dominated spheres.[35] Constraints on mobility and social connectivity prevent girls from making full use of community resources, and hinders learning and sharing with their peers.[36] Furthermore, adolescent girls are excluded from most decisions—from community meetings to decisions about their own marriage.[37]

Adolescent girls often encounter expectations that vary greatly from those placed on their male peers, particularly regarding sexuality and social interactions. In many cultures, a girl's identity is connected to her virginity and her perceived "purity," which can be considered a valuable asset and indicator of family honor. Expectations of purity pose obstacles to girls' education about their bodies, effectively preventing them from making informed decisions about when and whether to have sex. Instead, girls are commonly denied access to information regarding sex and sexuality because of "honor" and marriage norms.[38] They are forced into sex, into marriage, and pressured to begin bearing children early and frequently. A girl's cultural identity can also be the driver of harmful traditional practices such as FGM and child marriage.[39]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Social identity issues were particularly present in DRC, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the Philippines. Girls in multiple countries expressed that the different expectations placed on girls and boys put them at an unfair disadvantage. Girls

explained, with frustration, that they were not able to make choices or voice their opinions; they were expected to follow the set pathways and expectations laid out by others. A girl in the 16–19 age group in Ethiopia put it simply, "I want everyone to realize that women are capable of doing everything!" The expectations and roles placed on girls were raised as a concern in almost every country, but different cultural practices meant girls' experiences varied.

Girls said that they were overlooked in favor of boys in many areas, including education, food and chores, which made them feel less important, less worthy. "Why don't boys have to do any chores?" asked a Nigerian girl in the 13–15 age group. Girls felt that their responsibilities, and the expectation that they must put others first, hampered their own progress. In India, some out-of-school girls talked about having to work to fund their brothers' education. Many girls were the breadwinners in their households, and some were also responsible for family healthcare costs. A girl in the 13–15 age group in Liberia expressed the huge sacrifice some were forced to make to support their family: "Parents make girls have sex for money so that there is enough money for food and for the other younger children to go to school."

Girls also felt that many decisions were beyond their control, such as the decision to continue their education, to find a job, to move around the community or to choose their own spouse (particularly in India, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan). Girls talked with frustration about being penalized for boys' behavior, like the curfews imposed by parents or husbands to protect them from the perceived threat of boys and men. While girls in most countries felt like they were disadvantaged in favor of boys, girls in Brazil said that they experienced more discrimination related to their poverty and neighborhood than as a result of their gender. Girls in Brazil said teachers pre-judged children from poorer neighborhoods, expecting poor academic performance before any work began. This kind of discrimination meant poorer children often had low self-confidence, which impacted their academic performance and access to jobs.

One girl in the 15–19 age group in Pakistan said, "I wish I were a boy so that I could live freely like boys and not be restricted like girls," describing the lack of respect she felt girls received in her community, as compared to boys. Many other girls echoed this sentiment, describing how their behavior was constrained by the need to uphold reputation and avoid being judged by their families, male peers and others in the community.

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls talked about wanting life to be "fairer" for girls. They wanted to share roles and responsibilities, to be treated and valued equitably, to receive equal opportunities, to have the right to make decisions for themselves, and for men and boys to be responsible for their own actions. A girl in Pakistan in the 16–19 age group expressed her dream for equality: "I wish my community would allow me to leave my home in the same way they allow the boys to do."

When discussing hopes and dreams, a desire to help others and "give back" was a consistent theme across the countries. "I want to be a police offers so that I can protect the other women who are like me," said one girl in the 13–15 group. And a Kenyan girl in the 16–19 age group said, "I would like to be a business lady to change the life of my children and my family." Girls spoke sensitively about the issues affecting others around them, and their desire to help others was a significant part of their motivation to overcome poverty. Girls talked about wanting to learn skills so they could teach others, earning money to help pay for others' education and striving to make their parents proud. One girl in the 10–12 age group in Indonesia explained her sense of duty to her parents in their old age: "My mum has been taking care of me since I was little, and I have to repay what she has done to me, and I have to take care of my parents."

MARRIAGE

BACKGROUND

Because of the singular importance to girls' lives, as reflected in the consultations, marriage stands on its own in this report. While marriage takes many forms, it provides the foundational unit upon which familial and social relationships are structured for most people in the world. Marriage is a particularly influential institution for girls and women, whose opportunities, responsibilities and obligations are often governed by spouses, children and extended family members.[40] Therefore, the timing and circumstances of marriage and the choice of marital partner, as well as a wife's rights and responsibilities, will profoundly influence the trajectory of a girl's life. In much of the developing world, girls and women have very little choice regarding if, when and to whom they are wed, or if they are able to leave a marriage. Within the marriage, their rights may be severely restricted by legal barriers, restrictive social norms and by the use or threat of violence.

In spite of the fact that child marriage violates international human rights standards, as well as national law in most countries, the practice continues to be pervasive throughout the developing world. In many poor and rural settings, it is typical for girls to marry before they reach adulthood. About one-third of women aged 20–24 in the developing world were married before turning eighteen. Eleven percent of those women were married before they turned fifteen. This translates into around 14.2 million girls getting married each year, or 39,000 girls each day. If these trends continue, 142 million girls will marry in the next decade.[41] In twenty-one countries, the national rates of child marriage are forty percent or more, with western and central Africa and south Asia holding the highest proportion of married girls at forty-one and forty-six percent, respectively.[42]

Child marriage has profound effects on girls, cutting short educational, economic and social opportunities. Girls tend to drop out of school before they marry, and the legal and social barriers to reentry into school after marriage or pregnancy are insurmountable in many settings.[43] Girls with no education are three times more likely to marry or enter into union as children as those girls with a secondary or higher education.[44] Child brides are frequently isolated within the home, tasked with domestic responsibilities and expected to prove their fertility soon after marriage.

Married girls are forced to become sexually active early, lack access to contraception and face great risks to their health when they do become pregnant.[45] Married girls are more vulnerable to multiple forms of violence, and they often lack recourse to health and legal services.[46] Married girls and women can face abuse from husbands, in-laws or co-wives. Because of their limited education, social isolation and constrained autonomy, married girls are rarely able to work outside the home, which has implications for their economic status as well as their households.[47]

The children of child brides are also worse-off. Stillbirths and infant mortality are fifty percent more likely when the mother is under the age of twenty, and when the children do survive they are more likely to be malnourished and unhealthy.[48] In short, child marriage has lifelong consequences for girls, and perpetuates inter-generational cycles of poverty, violence and gender inequality.

Not only is the timing and circumstances of entry into marriage critical, so are the circumstances of the relationship itself. Legal, social and traditional norms profoundly influence the rights and power women have within marital relationships, and the options they have to leave a marriage. Marital rape exemptions and discriminatory provisions in inheritance, property and family laws are just some examples of how the rights of women can be compromised by marriage. Economic exchanges, such as dowry and brideprice, can exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls within marriage. When money or other financial assets are exchanged as part of the marital agreement, girls and women may have little recourse to bargain with a spouse or leave the marriage.

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls in cultures where early, forced or arranged marriage was prevalent talked extensively about their fears. A girl from the 13–15 age group in Pakistan said, "Parents think that children are their property. Even if a girl is not in agreement, they force her to give consent for marriage." A Filipino girl in the 10–12 age group highlighted the impact of early marriage on the future opportunities available to girls: "When girls 12 to 16 get married and get pregnant, they can't concentrate in class because they are sleepy and weak. So they drop out of school." A Liberian girl about the same age spoke with frustration about parents forcing girls into early marriage: "When a girl starts to get boobs, then her parents just think she is ready to be a woman—work and get married."

Girls worried that they would not get to choose who and when they married, and that early marriage would put an end to their childhood. In countries like Mexico, Indonesia and Ethiopia, girls discussed marriage as a means to protect one's reputation, particularly if a girl were to become pregnant. This was especially common in Indonesia, where children born out of wedlock are not granted birth certificates, posing many problems for education and employment. One Indonesian girl in the 13–15 age group explained, "Without a husband, your child experiences challenges. So you get married."

Girls felt that they bore a lot of responsibility in marriage and worried about how their lives would change: managing relationships and getting respect from in-laws, being a "good" wife and knowing what to do, the risk of abuse from their new family, as well as concerns about leaving their own family. One Indian girl in the 13–15 age group expressed great anxiety about her impending marriage, particularly concerning how her sick mother would cope without her daughter's income after she moved out. The girl's only hope was, "I want a husband who will understand my sorrows." Many girls talked of the emotional impact of leaving their own family and fears of having a strained relationship with their in-laws. Another Indian girl in the 16–19 age group put her wish very simply: "I wish for a mother-in-law who will treat me like her daughter." In Nigeria, co-wives and inequality within the marriage could cause emotional stress, particularly among the older girls, for whom marriage was imminent. One girl in the 13–15 age group remarked, "If you don't bathe enough, he'll favor the other wife and you'll have to do all the chores."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls wanted to choose when and whom they marry. Without exception, girls talked about getting married older. They wanted to prolong their childhood and feel prepared for marriage, and to be allowed to pursue career opportunities and become independent. A girl in the 13–15 age group from Pakistan said, "I wish I could change the thoughts of people who have their daughters married at a young age. And I would tell them that it is harmful for girls to be married at a young age and it could be dangerous for their lives as well." Another girl in the 16–19 age group in Pakistan remarked, "I want to abolish the curse of the dowry from society." In Ethiopia, girls had started to see a change in progress. The girls talked about Health Extension Workers visiting each family in their community to discuss the risks associated with early marriage. Girls believed that this education program was making early marriage less popular.

Girls also talked about wanting to feel safe and respected in marriage, not only by their husbands, but also by their in-laws and—in polygamous cultures like Nigeria—by other wives. Girls wanted to live in a home where they were cared for and supported, and where roles and responsibilities were shared. This desire for respect echoed across countries. Put simply by a girl in the 16–19 age group in Kenya: "I would like to have respect between me and my husband." And at the same age in Rwanda: "My dream is to have a husband and a good home." From the 13–15 age group in Egypt, "I wish I could marry a kind generous person and to have mutual love between us."

Many girls said they also wanted a husband that they could be proud of, and one who would help them progress. They talked about finding a "good" husband—someone respectful and well-educated, who treats his wife well, shares opportunities with her and helps her provide opportunities for their children. In Egypt many girls raised the desire for respect and support. One in the 16–19 age group said, "I would like to marry a good man and to take care of me... I would like him to have a good income so that he can compensate

me for the deprivation which I have suffered in my life."

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS ON GIRLS' IDENTITY

Girls from multiple countries and age groups articulated how they are treated differently and valued less than their male peers because of their gender and age. Legal discrimination, mobility restrictions, exclusion from school and paid work, social isolation, forced marriage and limited participation in public spheres are only a few of the identity-related challenges that girls face. These restrictions are often exacerbated when girls face other forms of discrimination related to their race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, mental or physical ability, citizenship or position in the household.

There is an urgent need for legal and policy standards that are explicitly designed to respond to girls' unique needs and vulnerabilities. At the same time, there is a need for campaigns and programs to change harmful gender norms. The next generation of development goals can help promote more positive notions about girls' identities, and in so doing, help unlock girls' full potential. To protect, respect and fulfill the rights of girls, the following actions should be taken:

Legal obstacles to girls' empowerment and equality must be dismantled; positive measures must be enacted to promote them. This means repealing or amending measures that provide, for instance, different rights for girls and for boys with regard to inheritance, age of marriage or rights within marriage. It also means actively promoting opportunities for girls through measures such as affirmative action in education and protections against violence and exploitation.

Girls need to be counted, planned and budgeted for. First and foremost, the births of girls need to be registered. Girls need access to legal documentation that guarantees their citizenship and gives them and their children access to essential services and protections from the state. Furthermore, girls' rights to freedom of expression, opinion and identity must be protected if they are to participate in and shape the policy process that directly impacts their life.

Development planners must collect and disaggregate data by age and gender, at a minimum. Information on age, gender, marital status, location, family income and school enrollment status should be collected for participants in all programs and sectors.

The diversity of girls should be acknowledged in programs and policies. Adolescent girls are a heterogeneous group. Their needs and opportunities will differ depending on a range of factors including location, religion, race and socioeconomic status. Laws should protect girls against multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization.

The most marginalized girls should be prioritized. Girls who are socially, politically and economically marginalized must be brought to the forefront of development programs and policies, which will require intentional analysis of who and where they are in different settings. Girls who are affected by natural disasters, conflicts or other emergencies should be prioritized because they are often the most vulnerable to violence and acute poverty.

Girls' voices must be heard in the development of programs and policies that affect them and their communities. The active empowerment of adolescent girls is the entry point for promoting civic participation.[49] Starting from early adolescence, girls should be taught and encouraged to participate in and even drive community discussions about their rights and needs. Schools and after-school programs can provide a strong platform to develop girls' leadership skills, offering education on the policy process and giving them tools to conduct effective advocacy.

End child marriage. Girls need to be supported to choose if, when and whom to marry. Laws to make eighteen the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys must be passed wherever they do not exist. And where such laws have been passed, they must be implemented and enforced. Raising awareness of minimum legal age of marriage, especially in rural areas where child marriage

prevalence is highest, is an important first step for implementation. Governments, NGOs and multilaterals need to prioritize action to prevent child marriage, including provision of alternatives to marriage such as safe, accessible and girl-friendly schools and financial literacy training to prepare girls for safe and productive livelihoods.

Support married girls and young mothers. Adolescent girls who are already married and/or who have children need to be prioritized for health, economic and political development activities. Legal rights and protections for married girls and women need to be expanded, including marriage formation and dissolution, protection from violence and property and inheritance rights.

Mobilize communities to promote more equitable gender norms. Legal reform is a necessary but insufficient step toward changing harmful social norms. In order to change attitudes about what is ideal and what is possible for girls, programs should target all community members—male and female, young and old—to raise awareness about the negative effects of gender inequality, and to promote alternatives for collaboration and cooperation at the family and community levels.

GIRLS' ENVIRONMENTS

Girls' lives and opportunities are shaped by their social and physical environments. The emotional, social and financial support of families and community members has the potential to equip girls with the confidence and resources to seek opportunities, and the lack of such support proves to be an enormous barrier.

Girls' physical environment also shapes their opportunities. The physical accessibility of friends, schools, health services and markets dictate many of the options available to girls. Their access to water, fuel and other natural resources directly impacts their economic well-being and time available for education and opportunities outside the home, as well as their overall health.

If girls are safe and secure within their homes and communities, they possess the most basic elements of health and well-being. If, on the other hand, girls live in fear of violence in their homes or communities, their ability to learn, work, participate in their communities and thrive will be stifled.

This section is divided into three themes that emerged from the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations: social support, local environment and safety and security.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

BACKGROUND

With the onset of puberty, and in many cases, marriage, girls leave school and begin losing opportunities to make friends, learn life skills, access health services and participate in civic life.[50] It is at the very moment girls are beginning to be deprived of their social support networks that they are entering a stage of life when they need them the most.

Restricted mobility in many developing countries is motivated by a desire to protect a girl's "honor" and her family's reputation by keeping girls safe from harm, unwanted sexual advances or consensual activity.[51] During adolescence, many girls experience decreasing autonomy as their male peers become more independent, mobile and begin to enjoy greater leisure time. This leaves girls with a sense of powerlessness, low self-esteem, diminished aspirations, shame, restraint, caution, confinement and duty.[52]

Girls' isolation is further amplified by the fact that their unpaid domestic activity competes with their education, training and paid employment—all opportunities for expanding their social networks and future outlook.[53] The numbers are striking: 22.7 percent of women in Mexico, 17.6 percent of women in India and 15.7 percent of women in China report not ever interacting with friends.[54]

Urban and rural girls experience isolation and lack of mobility differently. In urban settings, girls who are out of school often have no social outlets, while rural girls may have more opportunity to interact with peers as their chores are often done in the company of others.[55] Isolation cuts across class and is not just a result of poverty; it is also gendered: wealthy girls have been found to have fewer friends than poor boys.[56] However, isolation and lack of mobility are exacerbated for the most vulnerable girls—those who are poor, or discriminated against because of their race, religion or caste.[57] Experiences of violence—as well as the associated stigma, shame and silence—can further isolate girls and women. Isolation and restricted mobility pose serious risks to girls. For example, a study in South Africa found that socially isolated girls were at greater risk of nonconsensual sex.[58]

The lack of safe physical spaces is a major concern for girls in the developing world. There may be nowhere to stay if she's at risk; no one to safely ask questions that may be considered taboo; no one to borrow money from in a crisis.[59] Research has found that some girls hope marriage will give them freedom from overly protective parents, but this is rarely the case—young married women are even more isolated than their peers, with fewer social networks and less mobility, freedom and access to information.[60] Solid friendship networks and social support can help the most vulnerable of girls protect themselves from HIV and other threats to their health and well-being.[61]

Girl-friendly safe spaces—such as community centers and schools—can provide girls the opportunity to own the content of their discussions, set group rules, meet with trusted female leaders and create friendships.[62] Creating safe spaces—where girls can interact with peers and mentors, strengthen their social networks and express themselves freely—are critical to providing girls with an outlet for support.[63] Coupled with opportunities to learn, play and just be girls, these spaces can prove critical to altering community perceptions of what is acceptable for girls, and can improve the girls' aspirations for themselves. These spaces, in addition to forming support networks, can expose girls to mentors and role models, who can greatly influence a girl's perception of what is achievable in her own future.[64]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls felt that they were restricted from making positive social connections like friendships, or accessing networks that could lead to positive changes in their lives, such as educational or employment opportunities. Many girls expressed feeling isolated as a result. One girl in the 16–19 age group in DRC said, "I'm the only girl who's still at home—my sister already has a family of her own. I'm lonely; I don't like it." Girls often cited two main restrictions preventing them from developing important social connections: First, girls said they didn't have the time to spend with others due to domestic or work responsibilities. Second, girls said they felt friendships and peer networks were discouraged by their family and community, who considered them a distraction or negative influence on girls. While families were generally a key source of support, many girls felt they were also a hindrance due to the restrictions they placed on girls. A girl in the 13–15 age group in Pakistan admitted that she had attended the consultation workshop without telling her father, who believed she should be homebound. "I've come to this workshop today secretly. My father does not like this and says I should stay home," she confessed. The girls' mother and brother supported her involvement, and had encouraged her to attend in secret. Another girl in the 13–15 group in Ethiopia, where peer relationships are especially restricted, explained: "Girls are not allowed to spend too much time together, or rumors can start."

Girls across the countries recognized the negative impact this had on their lives, expressing that they felt unable to seek help, or get good advice on taboo topics like relationships, sex and health.

"Some people keep it a secret when they get their periods because their mothers are too shy to talk about it." —Nigeria, age 13 to 15

"I want to get more information about sexuality so that young people think better things in a future," —Mexico, age 16 to 19

"It's sad that girls can't talk to their families about their worries." —Ethiopia, age 13 to 15

Girls who did have friends and/or access to support noticed a positive impact on their lives. Those participating in NGO or local development programs felt their involvement gave them a voice and provided them with a safe space to meet others and learn new skills. A girl in the 16–19 age group from Pakistan participating in a Plan program said, "The confidence I've gained is from Plan. Now I'm confident to share my voice and the voice of other girls." Girls also often said they felt this kind of support from their community, which could provide access to opportunities as well. For example, in some countries, such as Brazil, girls viewed church as a place to get help with small funds for school or other activities. Friendship had a tremendously positive impact on girls' lives. Girls saw their friends as a key source of advice and support, and friends will often share opportunities and connections with each other. As one girl in the DRC's 16–19 age group said, "I've got friends surrounding me who can help me."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Overall, girls wanted to be able to build their networks and access all types of support. In particular, girls are looking to formal organizations such as the government and NGOs for financial support and initiatives to help girls meet with their peers and access opportunities. One girl from the 13–15 age group in the Philippines trying to access such support said, "I want someone to sponsor me so that I can achieve my dream of being a nurse, because my parents don't support me with my studies."

Many girls wished the community were more supportive; they hoped for an environment where girls could meet peers and work together the way boys did, free of judgment. A Pakistani girl in the 13–15 age group expressed her frustration at this issue: "I wish that the people living in my village would not criticize girls and would work together for their education."

Finally, girls stressed the importance of having friends. Girls said they wanted to be able to choose their friends and have more time to spend with them. They all recognized the emotional and practical support that can come through friendship.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

BACKGROUND

The international community has long recognized violence against girls and women as a violation of human rights. However, this was not codified in human rights laws and frameworks until 1993, when the UN adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence.[65] While safety and security were not part of the MDGs, they are fundamental to ensuring the equal rights of girls and women.

In many places, girls live in daily fear of violence. Violence against girls cuts across income, class, culture and residence, and can take multiple forms, ranging from street harassment, physical violence and sexual assault to femicide and rape as a tactic of war. Harmful traditional practices like FGM and child marriage are also forms of violence.[66] Violent acts take place in homes, schools and out in the community, and are most commonly perpetrated by those closest to the girls—their families, spouses, peers, teachers and neighbors.[67]

Globally, 150 million girls under the age of eighteen are estimated to have experienced sexual violence.[68] As many as sixty percent of

sexual assaults are committed against girls under the age of fifteen.[69] Approximately 125 million women have experienced FGM, with more than two million girls in Africa facing the risk annually.[70] Fourteen million girls marry each year, exposing them to an increased probability of violence at the hands of their spouses, since women who marry young are more likely to be abused, and more likely to believe the poor treatment is justified.[71] Adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 24 are more likely to have been exposed to physical violence by an intimate partner than older women. Experiences of sexual or physical violence have profound physical and psychological effects, and are associated with poor mental health, suicide, unwanted pregnancy, substance abuse, gynecological complications, increased risk of HIV and other STDs, lower rates of school attendance and participation in the workforce, poor educational outcomes, and restricted involvement in public life.[72]

Attitudes towards and acceptance of violence can form some of the most harmful cultural norms and barriers to change. The multi-country Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) collect data on women's attitudes towards violence, demonstrating wide-ranging but shockingly high levels of justification for wife beating. For example, in the most recent DHS from DRC, forty-seven percent of women believe a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife if she argues with him. In most of the countries (India, Indonesia and Philippines being notable exceptions), over twenty percent of women believe a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife if she refuses sex with him (See Table 2).

TABLE 2: WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN CONSULTATION COUNTRIES

	DRC	Egypt	Ethiopia	India	Indonesia	Kenya	Liberia	Nigeria	Philippines	Rwanda
Husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife if:										
Burns the food	28.2	7.9	47.3	20.4	3.1	13.4	14	16.2	2.1	18.8
Argues with him	47.1	14.8	45.4	30.3	6.8	30.9	42.7	27.6	2.9	32.7
Goes out without telling him	53.3	31.5	43.2	29	23.7	30.7	41.9	32.2	5.1	35.8
Neglects the children	55.5	29.4	51.8	34.7	24.7	41.7	44.6	30.5	11.6	43.6
Refuses to have sex with him	38.2	21.7	38.6	14.1	6.7	22.7	21.7	25.3	1.9	36.6
TOTAL (women interviewed):	9,995	16,527	16,515	124,385	32,895	8,444	7,092	33,385	13,594	1,3671
From: STAT Compiler: Demographic and Health Surveys (most recent).										

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) provides insight into male behaviors and attitudes towards violence: across the six countries, men reported twenty to forty percent rates of physical partner violence.[73] Given these results, policymakers and programmers have in recent years emphasized the need to work with men and boys as allies in influencing gender norms and reducing violence.[74] This includes a new focus on key influencers and decision-makers in a girl's life to reduce vulnerability and risk, while improving resources and agency.[75]

Girls in poor, urban areas are especially at risk of violence. For example, in Sao Paolo, a girl or woman is assaulted every fifteen seconds.[76] There has been an emphasis on improving community safety and child protection as a means to reduce violence, and particularly violence aimed at young people. For example, in interviews of women in six cities, Action Aid found that a lack of access to public services—including transportation, decent housing, sanitation, water and street lighting—left many poor girls and women at risk of violence. This leaves girls vulnerable to risk when they take the bus to school and walk home at night, and makes their family less willing to allow them mobility. By paying attention to girls' lives and needs, the risks they are exposed to due to lack of public services can be greatly reduced.[77]

Girls' exposure to violence mostly occurs in the places where they should feel the safest- in homes, schools and within their local community. Efforts have focused on creating safe spaces where girls' social networks are expanded and they have space to speak for themselves, share their experiences and develop strategies to help manage crises.[78]

While girls most often face the threat of violence from those closest to them, they also endure threats from global forces in the forms of sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons and forced labor. Girls and women make up seventy-five percent of all trafficking victims identified globally. Fifty-eight percent of all trafficking is for the purpose of sexual exploitation and thirty-six percent is for forced labor.[79]

A compromised physical environment puts girls at increased risk of hunger, displacement, injury and death. During involuntary migrations in the wake of armed conflict or natural disaster, girls and women can become more exposed to discrimination and abuse, such as sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, child abuse and alcohol-related abuse.[80] For example, during the 1994 Rwandan genocide almost half a million women and girls were sexually assaulted, and in the DRC, at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence were documented from 1996 onwards. In these environments girls face increased risks of safety violations and human rights abuses arising from the breakdown in community cohesion, social structures and services, a disproportionate household burden, decreased likelihood of school attendance and families seeking bride price as a means of survival.[81] An increased focus on child-friendly services and protection policies during times of emergency can help protect children from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence.[82]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

In the consultations, girls often spoke of feeling vulnerable in public and fearing strangers in the community. A Rwandan girl in the 16–19 age group asked, "Why do girls get raped by men? I don't understand." Many girls said abuse in public was relatively common. This abuse ranged from verbal to physical abuse, and some of the girls were particularly concerned about more serious risks like rape or kidnapping. An Indonesian girl in the 10–12 age group said, "I hope when I return from my Qu'ran class I won't walk alone. I have to be with my friends so that I won't be kidnapped."

Girls also shared their concerns and doubts about reporting such crimes to the authorities. "Sometimes men lure hawkers into their homes and rape them," said one Nigerian girl in the 10–12 age group. Girls often linked these incidents to the alcohol, violence and drug issues affecting their communities. They feared abuse and harmful traditional practices, but did not have access to help. The uniting theme was that all girls felt the threat and, in many cases, the reality of directed violence, and were often concerned about reporting these crimes.

While some girls spoke about the sense of security they gained from their communities and people in their lives, others shared experience of abuse committed by those close to them. According to a Pakistani girl in the 13–15 age group, "Girls are seen as the weakest link—if there's an old family feud, they target girls to damage their reputation." Girls mainly shared that their family, home, school and trusted members of the community, like local leaders or teachers, gave them a sense of security. A girl in Indonesia's 10–12 age group talked about this, saying, "I know that if something happened then I could go to the community head. They would make sure it was okay." In Rwanda, a girl in the 13–15 age group said, "I trust my family to keep me safe." And one about the same age in China

explained, "I wish I could come to school on a Saturday as well. It makes me feel happy and safe being at school."

Girls who talked about abuse shared their own and friends' experiences of being beaten by their fathers, mothers or mothers-in-law. In certain countries, like Egypt, abuse in schools was quite common. Girls feared being married off by families at a young age and becoming trapped in a physically and emotionally abusive home environment. Arranged marriages and polygamy often came up as a cause of concern in Nigeria, where one girl in the 13–15 age group said, "My greatest fear is having a co-wife." Similarly, girls recognized that they could often be trapped in these situations, due to social pressure and manipulative husbands.

Girls felt they lacked a voice to complain and would often face negative consequences, such as blame and further abuse, if they reported these crimes. One girl in India in the 16–19 age group said, "Even if the girl is not at fault, she still gets the blame." And another Indian girl in the 13–15 age group said, "They shouldn't make girls stay inside. They should just teach the boys how to behave." In Brazil, a girl in the 13–15 age group noted, "Police are thieves. They rob even more than the thieves in the favela."

Additionally girls pointed to the local environment's impact on their safety. They talked about how travel in and around the community, and their physical isolation, often put them at risk. A girl in Mexico in the 13–15 age group explained, "I would like to have more security in our country and our houses and in the schools."

The type of crimes committed against girls was sometimes influenced by the specific country context:

> In the DRC, girls felt the omnipresent threat of rape and other war-related violence. *"Everyday we experience war, there is enormous instability. The conflict explains why we experience so many attacks and girls are raped so frequently,"* said one girl in the 16–19 age group.

> In rural Kenya, FGM came up more frequently, as one girl in the 16–19 age group explained: *"The problems we face is FGM. Girls are highly affected as they bleed excessively, hence FGM is of adverse danger."*

> In the urban centers of Egypt and Brazil, crime and personal safety were primary concerns. For example: *"I wish to walk the streets without being scared,"* said one Egyptian in the 16–19 age group.

> In Mexico, dominant worries involved the threat of being kidnapped or sold into sexual slavery.

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls everywhere wanted an end to assault and abuse, as illustrated by a number of their statements:

I also want to stop violence against women. —Ethiopia, age 16 to 19

I want to stop atrocities against women and girls. —India, age 13 to 15

I wish violence, muggings and exploitation would decrease. —Brazil, age 13 to 15

Girls did not approve of abuse and assault, nor the men who perpetrated it:

I don't like men playing with little girls in the bathroom. —Liberia, age 10 to 12

I don't like men who beat up their women. —Liberia, age 10 to 12

Girls spoke of ending harmful traditional practices. In Liberia, a girl in the 13–15 age group said, "I wish girls didn't have to go to bush school because it takes them out of education." Girls also felt a need to protect their reputation. A girl of about the same age in India suggested, "Every boy should think of a girl like his own sister. Then they won't commit crimes against her."

Girls wanted perpetrators of violence to be held accountable. "I think rapists should be arrested and punished severely," said one Kenyan girl in the 13–15 age group. A Liberian of roughly the same age said, "I wish rapists would be put in jail for life." Girls wanted better opportunities to protect themselves, and emphasized the need for systems that supported and allowed them to report crimes without fear or risk to their reputation.

Many girls, especially in the 13–15 age group in India, expressed a strong desire to address violence against girls and women. "I want to become a policewoman and stop female feticide. I have to stop many different kinds of corruption. I have to fulfill the dreams of my parents," said one. Another demonstrated that girls can conceive of creative solutions to entrenched problems: "Nowadays there are many atrocities on women. In order to stop this, women should unite. I will set up a Karate training center free of cost. Then women can protect themselves." Another explained: "My dream is to become a police woman. I will work very hard for that. Police should stop the atrocities against women. Today even 3 to 4-year-olds are raped." And one 14-year-old girl from India described her plans to become an activist:

When I grow up, I want to become a social reformer. I want to put an end to all the injustice done to women—especially killing of the female child in the womb. It is very rampant here. Everybody in the world should be humane. Here, there are more boys than girls. I want to tell everyone that boys and girls are equal. Stop this discrimination. Girls should be given justice.

Girls spoke of the need for better systems for protecting girls from crimes, like one from the 16–19 age group in China, who said, "I think girls need to be more aware of self-protection. Even though there are policemen in a society, they respond very slowly. Basically they appear after you have been hurt."

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

BACKGROUND

Girls living in poverty face many of the same environmental challenges as others. While the literature about adolescent girls' unique experiences of their physical and natural environment is extremely limited, the international community is increasingly aware of the impacts on girls' daily lives, health and futures resulting from climate change, deforestation, land degradation, air and water pollution, food and water security and urbanization.

Like women, girls are particularly close to many of the risks associated with environmental change. Girls carry a great deal of the household labor burden, for example—a burden that forces them to be integrally connected to their local environments, for better or worse. Girls and women, particularly those living in rural communities, are often the ones responsible for gathering water, firewood and food, enabling the family to cook, eat, wash and have heat or sanitation.[83] Rather than going to school, girls living in rural areas often have to spend their time planting and harvesting crops, tending to livestock and processing foodstuffs for their families and markets.[84] But the very nature of this work can place these girls at great risk. Not only does cooking on open fires and biomass-fueled stoves deplete forests, destroy agricultural land and contribute to climate change, but they also produce toxic smoke emissions that diminish indoor and outdoor air quality, posing great health risks to girls, since they comprise a large proportion of the nearly three billion people who cook on such polluting appliances.[85] According to the WHO, wood-fired cookstoves can produce pollutants at levels up to a hundred times higher than recommended limits, leading to pneumonia, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart disease.[86]

Indeed, environmental factors contribute to nearly one-quarter of the overall global disease burden.[87] With increasing industrialization across the developing world, more and more countries are facing threats introduced by new synthetic substances, like pesticides used in agriculture, persistent organic pollutants found in auto exhaust and other toxins closely regulated in most industrialized nations, which are seeping into the natural environment in developing countries. These pollutants are reaching the bloodstreams of girls and women in low- and middle-income countries through soil, air and water, increasing health risks for them and their children.[88]

Aside from the natural environment, the physical environment in poor settings can also put girls at great risk. Limited electricity in both poor rural and urban settings can mean a lack of lighting, making streets and communities even more dangerous for girls. Inadequate options for transportation, often a symptom of weak infrastructure in many countries, can mean limited options for girls to travel safely and securely to school, work or even to their friends' houses. Without quality roads, railways, communications systems and other basic infrastructure, girls have restricted access to health services, education, employment and other opportunities to fulfill their potential.

More than half of the world's population now lives in cities.[89] Slums continue to grow as poor migrants, including adolescent girls seeking a better life, move into cities that are not prepared to receive them. These informal settlements are often both dangerous to the health and safety of girls, but are also environmentally unsound and hazardous. Girls living in such polluted settlements, whether in the newer favelas of Rio de Janeiro or the longstanding Dharavi slum of Mumbai, face unregulated living conditions that are lacking clean water and adequate sanitation. The lack of sanitation can be particularly challenging and even dangerous for girls, particularly during times of menstruation. In many cases, slums are built on land that may be toxic, vulnerable to mudslides or otherwise physically hazardous and unsafe.[90] Girls living in both urban and rural areas increasingly face a shortage of clean, potable water and sources of nutritious food.

Climate change is another challenge facing adolescent girls today. Not only does a changing climate exacerbate the environmental challenges that girls face, it also intensifies gender inequality.[91] There is no greater example than the impact of climate change on girls and women's household burdens: as the ones who must travel further to fetch water and firewood, they struggle harder to produce food for their families during times of climate stress.[92] The greater the burden of household work, the less likely a girl is to attend school.

Frequent crop shortfalls as a result of natural disasters or gradual changes in climate patterns pose unprecedented challenges that will only continue to grow as the impacts of climate change are felt around the world. Girls, as contributors to the household burden of collecting wood and water, and as planters and harvesters of food, are critical to future sustainable development.[93]

The greater the decrease in crop yields due to droughts, floods or poor soil quality, the more likely girls are to go hungry, as the men and boys in many families around the world are given priority when food is scarce. In some societies, boys are given preferential treatment over girls in rescue efforts. These gender inequalities mean that women and girls are at significantly higher risk of dying during natural disasters.[94] As mentioned in the earlier discussion of violence, the displacement cause by natural disasters can also place girls and women at increased risk of discrimination and abuse.

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls in all of the countries studied felt that their local environments could negatively impact their quality of life, particularly their health, security and access to facilities. They also felt a sense of exclusion from the rest of society because they lived in poorer communities.

The emotional impact that pollution, poor sanitation and insecurity had on girls was significant. A girl in the 16–19 age group in DRC explained: "Girls are suffering here. We are suffering very much. Why? In my area, the main problem is poor access to water. We have to get up at 4 a.m. every morning to fetch water from the lake." Girls also mentioned the lack of security that stems from living in poor quality housing, like shacks and mud huts, as a girl in Kenya's 16–19 age group said she was "tired of living in a mud house and the insecurity associated with it is great."

Many girls talked about the difficult experiences they have had living among trash. "People dump rubbish behind the school and so we have to clean it with our bare hands," one Pakistani girl in the 13–15 age group explained. Many girls talked about the spread of disease stemming from the water and air pollution in their neighborhoods. A girl in the 13–15 age group in India said, "I wish people did not leave their rubbish everywhere; the pollution brings flies and mosquitoes, which make us sick."

Girls also repeatedly mentioned the lack of toilets and sanitation facilities. "There is only one toilet in the whole slum, and you have to pay to use it, so no one does. Sometimes your neighbor will go behind your house or people go in a bag and just throw it," complained a Liberian girl in the 10–12 age group. Another Liberian of roughly the same age agreed: "I wish there was somewhere for people to go to the toilet."

Girls said that where they live is too often a place of fear, danger and isolation. "I'm scared of robbers killing people at night and kidnapping children," confessed a Kenyan girl in the 13–15 age group. She shared common fears with a Pakistani girl of roughly the same age: "As a girl, it's not safe to go outside," she said.

While all of the girls recognized the significant effect their environment had on their lives, there were some different priorities in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, quality of housing, crime and space were often less of an issue. However, girls in remote areas described a key issue as lack of access to, or distance from, health and educational facilities. If one Mexican girl in the 16–19 group could do one thing to help her rural community, "I would build more hospitals and train physicians and nurses."

In urban areas, housing was often worse quality and girls described being under constant threat of relocation or upheaval by the government. A Chinese girl in the 13–15 age group described her living situation: "Our house is very cramped: I sleep on the bottom bed and my parents above me." Girls in urban areas were also more at risk to crime and other dangers. This was often a result of where they lived—for example, in urban peripheries outside of government reach, where crime thrives.

In some countries, girls were concerned about the impact of environmental degradation on their ability to produce crops. This was especially the case in rural areas, where people's livelihoods were tied to the land. One girl in the 13–15 age group from the Philippines expressed environmental concerns: "My wish in our [village] is to stop illegal logging. In this way I can prevent landslide and flood."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls wanted to live in better conditions for the benefit of their health, safety and how they were viewed by others. Girls sought improvements to the aesthetics, feel and maintenance of their neighborhood, and hoped for the establishment of safe social spaces. Many girls wished for better local environments and effective governance to improve their health and safety, like expanding municipal waste disposal and improving lighting and roads. As a girl in the 16–19 age group in Pakistan explained, "People push rubbish from

their own doorstep to their neighbors'; no-one actually fixes the problem." Girls also sought improvements for schools; a Nigerian girl in the 10-12 age group said, "I want our school to be renovated because classrooms are damaged. Provide us with some security staff. Build a fence and a gate for us."

Girls wanted to live in safer communities, which would include better roads. An Indonesian girl in the 13-15 age group spoke of the need for improved physical safety: "I want my village to be more reinforced in terms of physical safety so the children who live here, especially the young age, will not experience any harm." Roads and streets were very important. "They need to improve roads because they cause so many accidents," said a Nigerian girl in the 10–12 age group. In Indonesia, a girl in the 13–15 age group said, "I want to contribute for fixing the road, so the road can be passed by the vehicle, so people can continue their activity smoothly." Girls also shared negative experiences of poor lighting making the streets more dangerous. Other complaints about roads had different underlying reasons. As a girl in the 13–15 age group in the Philippines explained, "We really need your help to construct the road in our [village] and in our school because, as we go to school every day, mud and dirt causes our uniforms to get dirty."

Girls also spoke of feeling as though their neighborhoods had been forgotten by the rest of society, since they lacked trash collection or proper sewage treatment, and government officials will not even enter "dangerous slums" to issue birth certificates. Girls want their neighborhoods to be valued by the broader society, and for others to stop neglecting and marginalizing people because of where they live.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS ON GIRLS' ENVIRONMENTS

The girls who participated in the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations raised many challenges that they face in their social and physical environments. These external factors shape their identities, assets and opportunities. We have an obligation to address the obstacles impeding girls, and to make their environments safer, healthier and more supportive. Furthermore, girls have knowledge and ideas that can transform their environments, if they are provided with the space, support and resources to share and implement them. To unlock their potential, the following actions are critical.

Protect girls from violence. The right to a life free of violence and coercion is a fundamental human right. First and foremost, laws, policies and services should protect girls. Governments need to create and enforce laws and policies to prevent violence, and invest in primary and secondary prevention. Definitions of violence should include not only physical violence, but also forced marriage, trafficking, FGM, and intimate partner violence.

Provide girls with safe, "girl-friendly" spaces and supportive social networks. Girls need time and space to meet other girls, to play, to seek information, to build friendships, identify mentors and supportive adults, and simply, to be girls. They need safe spaces in their communities that are free from violence, coercion and judgment.

Ensure access to health, justice and legal services. The awareness and capacity of actors—from policymakers to lawyers and doctors in the health, justice and legal sectors—to respond to and prevent violence must be increased. Governments must ensure that reporting mechanisms are in place and accessible to girls. They should also ensure the provision of appropriate survivor response services, including physical and psychosocial health; legal aid, including protections from retribution for prosecution; accountability/rule of law to hold crimes to account and punish perpetrators; law reform; and international justice mechanisms. In particular, governments should implement policies and devote specific resources to address violence against particularly marginalized girls, including married girls, those with disabilities, migrants, refugees and trafficking victims.

Change harmful social norms that justify violence against girls and women. Norms that justify and perpetuate violence against women and girls must be addressed. Legal reform is a first step, but social norm change should also include the active engagement of community members, including religious and traditional leaders and boys and men.

Let girls lead. Girls need to be equipped and empowered to contribute to and lead important decisions that affect their lives. Girls are closely engaged with their local environments. They have unique knowledge that can and must be tapped to find solutions to the many environmental challenges they face. Girls' needs must be taken into account by environmental planners, from debates over sustainable development at the local level, to climate change negotiations at the international level. Girls can lead the way towards creating safer, healthier environments, but it will require significant changes in policymaking and programming. To date, scant attention has been paid to the rights, needs and involvement of girls in environmental discussions, particularly in international negotiations and forums, where issues related to women and girls have far too often led to unnecessary controversy and stalemate. Including the voice and perspective of girls—those whose very lives and futures depend on having a healthy and safe environment in which to grow up—can contribute to social and economic development that is environmentally sustainable, just and equitable.

GIRLS' ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Girls need and want opportunities and assets that can improve their lives in the present, while also preparing them for a healthier and more secure adulthood. Assets include four key components:[95]

- Human assets, such as skills and knowledge, ability to work, good health, self-esteem, bargaining power, autonomy and control over decisions.
- Financial assets, such as cash, savings, loans, gifts and regular remittances or entitlements.
- Physical assets, such as land, housing, jewelry, shoes, clothing, productive assets, tools and equipment for business activities.
- Social assets, such as social networks, group membership, relations of trust, access to wider institutions of society and freedom from violence.

This section of the report concentrates primarily on human assets: health, emotional well-being and ability to work. The section on jobs and money includes both human assets (the ability to work, the requisite autonomy and control over decisions), as well as financial assets (the actual money and other compensation for work). Investments in these areas have profound consequences for girls' well-being during their adolescence and throughout their lives.

HEALTH

BACKGROUND

Health was one of the topics most frequently raised by girls in the consultations, and it is one that affects them in a multitude of ways. Around the world, countries have made tremendous progress in keeping children alive through their fifth birthday. This means that more children than ever are reaching adolescence in a generally healthy state. However, while under-five mortality rates have continued to decline, mortality rates among adolescents have remained level for decades.[96][v]

Only within the past two decades has adolescence been recognized as a distinct period of life that demands the attention of the health

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[v] It is important to note that while a good amount of health information exists for children under five and, in some cases, adolescents fifteen and older, there is a dearth of internationally comparable data for adolescents generally, and particularly for those 10 to 15 years olds (See, for example, Patton et al).

sector. Research on brain development, combined with a better understanding of changes in physical, cognitive, mental and social development over the course of the life cycle, have highlighted adolescence as a profound and complex period that can influence health outcomes, as well as consolidate attitudes and behaviors for the rest of one's life.[97] In thinking about adolescent health, therefore, one must consider meeting the immediate health needs and concerns of girls and boys both before and during puberty and adolescence, while at the same time recognizing that what they do now may affect their health across their lifecycle.

In the nascent field of adolescent health, sexual and reproductive care has thus far been at the forefront, and with good reason. Globally, sixteen million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth every year—ninety-five percent of them in the developing world.[98] Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among adolescents girls aged 15 to 19 throughout the developing world.[99] Early pregnancy can also impact girls' long-term health, putting them at higher risk of complication, such as fistula. Family planning can allow girls to space, and even delay pregnancies. When girls have children closely together they are at increased risk of health issues such as hemorrhaging, and death.[100] Also, their children are at much higher risk for death during childbirth or infancy: Infant mortality among those who are born fewer than two years after their next oldest sibling is nearly twice as much as among infants who are born two to three years after their next oldest sibling.[101] Girls seeking to terminate their pregnancies face the risk of unsafe abortion – an estimated three million of them in 2008 alone.[102] Unsafe abortion can have dire consequences for girls and women including severe bleeding, uterine perforation, internal infection, reproductive tract infections, infertility, and death.[103]

Girls are also at significantly greater risk than boys of acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Evidence suggests that two-thirds of 15- to 19-year-olds newly infected with an STI are female.[104] Further, one out of four sexually active girls is diagnosed with an STI each year, with many more likely undiagnosed.[105] Girls and young women aged 15 to 24 have HIV infection rates that are twice as high as young men, accounting for twenty-two percent of all new HIV infections globally, and thirty-one percent of new infections in sub-Saharan Africa.[106] At the same time, strides in treatment and care for those infected means that many children born with HIV are now becoming adolescents, creating new challenges and needs with regard to health care.[107]

Lack of information, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health, can be a major barrier to girls' health. Inadequate access to sexuality education and family planning services, combined with a dearth of information about their own bodies and sexuality in general, diminishes girls' power in their relationships, putting them at increased risk of unwanted and high-risk sexual encounters. In most regions of the world, girls begin having sex before boys.[108] These factors, combined with coercive sex and pressure to marry and have children, contribute to continued high rates of early pregnancy.[109]

Additionally, in many cultures and societies, adolescents have limited access to high-quality, confidential and youth-friendly health services. Partly as a result, many adolescent pregnancies are not reported or attended by skilled attendants, so girls do not receive the prenatal, childbirth and postnatal care they need.[110] Even when they can access services, their families, community norms and even health workers themselves can prevent young people from accessing services. Failure to protect privacy and confidentiality, as well as costs involved in treatment, can also deter young people from accessing health services.

While significant focus has been paid to girls' sexual and reproductive health, attention has only recently begun to turn toward other health-related issues that may impact girls' transitions to adulthood. Adolescent girls in poor countries also face a high risk of anemia and malnutrition, which can have long-term consequences for their health and that of their children.[111] Nearly fifty percent of adolescent girls ages fifteen to nineteen in India are underweight, leaving them vulnerable to disease, early death and lifelong health consequences.[112] UNICEF found that in twenty-one countries with data, one-third of girls were anemic, which can create an exposed risk of hemorrhage and sepsis during childbirth.[113] In many cases, girls living in poverty and food-insecure households eat what little food remains after the male members of the family have eaten, which can result in under-nutrition and ill health.[114]

With the continuing expansion of cities and urban slums, as well as with weather conditions evolving due to climate change, communities around the world are seeing increasing outbreaks of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Malaria and dengue continue to plague

many countries, and have only recently begun appearing in locations that have never before faced these serious health challenges, such as the highlands of East Africa.[115]

Behaviors, norms and practices that begin in adolescence can have impacts throughout the remainder of young people's lives. About half the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)—cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases—stems from behaviors rooted in adolescence, such as the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, inadequate exercise and poor nutritional intake.[116] The global burden of NCDs is growing rapidly in the global South, with four of five deaths caused by NCDs in 2008 occurring in low- and middle-income countries.[117] This number is only likely to grow, with industrialization, urbanization and increasing access by—and marketing to—adolescents of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy diets.

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls found it hard to access healthcare services for themselves and their families, an issue of particular importance among older girls as they approached marriage and motherhood, and began considering the impact this might have on their children. Girls said that there was often little or no state healthcare in their communities (particularly in rural areas), forcing them to travel great distances. One girl in the 13–15 age group in the Philippines spoke of the need for more facilities: "I want to build a hospital in our place to help those people in need… many people die because of the illnesses, and they do not reach hospital because of the distance." A girl in the DRC shared a similar view: "If I were a leader, I could build hospitals everywhere so that people don't walk a long distance to reach to the hospital for care."

Girls generally felt that the quality of healthcare available to them was poor, that long queues and waiting times were common, and that the cost of healthcare has made it an unaffordable luxury for many. Girls in China explained that the state-funded healthcare system was not pre-paid, so they had pay out of pocket and wait to be reimbursed for treatments. In Pakistan, even getting to the hospital could prove too much of a financial burden. "After paying for transport to get there, there's no money left to pay the doctor," said one Pakistani girl in the 16–19 age group. Girls in Pakistan also spoke of doctors and nurses that demanded bribes. "People give birth at home because the doctors and nurses in hospitals expect you to give them money," reported one girl in the 16–19 age group.

Girls also felt that there were few resources for them to access health information, particularly in rural areas where girls felt there was less exposure to media and information in general. "Providing access to hospitals is also crucial. You can only go to school, or find a job, if you're in good health. Education about health issues is important," expressed a girl in DRC.

Younger girls, in particular, said that they lacked knowledge, especially regarding sexual health, their bodies, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that these topics were often taboo, so girls were discouraged from asking questions for fear of judgment, even with their mothers. The taboo blocking all discussion of female reproductive processes can even diminish girls' access to the most basic sanitary supplies, which can have a drastic impact on their lives. In the Philippines, girls talked about not being able to attend to school while menstruating, since they didn't have access to sanitary products. While NGOs offer some support on these issues, girls felt that such initiatives were often targeted to girls who live in cities.

Girls believed that their health was affected by poverty and inequality in general. Some reported wide-ranging challenges—everything from limited access to food and clean water, to the cost of essential hygiene items, and the great distances girls must walk to collect fuel. For example, some girls noted that they didn't always get enough food. One girl in India's 13–15 age group explained, "We don't get a meal every day." A girl from the 10–12 age group in the Philippines shared her yearning for healthy food: "My dream for young girls is for them to finish their studies and eat delicious, nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables so they don't get ill." Girls spoke of their need for basic sanitation, like a Pakistani girl in the 16–19 age group, who said, "I have to wash myself and my clothes in polluted water."

Even girls that were relatively healthy often felt like they were carrying the financial and emotional burden of others' poor health. Girls worried about the possibility of having to leave school to support their family if a parent were to become ill. An Indonesian girl in the 13–15 age group recalled the experience of people in her community who could not afford healthcare: "If someone gets ill or is in labor, we have to go to the nearest hospital. But often we get turned away and have to go to the next. People die doing this." For many girls, their family provided their key support network, so girls often became emotional about the thought of a family member becoming ill. One girl in China's 16–19 age group revealed, "My mother is the most important person to me…. I have no one, if I don't have her." Girls in Brazil talked at length about the emotional pressures associated with drug addiction amongst family, with one girl in the 13–15 group sharing a hopeful wish: "My dream is to see my father stay away from booze and my brother stay away from drugs."

Traditional practices and cultural issues, which impact girls both physically and emotionally, caused great concern among project participants. Practices and issues varied by country, including FGM in Kenya and Liberia, arranged marriage leading to early pregnancy in India, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan, female feticide/infanticide in India and China, "bush-schools" in Liberia taking girls out of mainstream education to teach them a wife's duties, and widespread rape everywhere. Even at a young age, girls were aware of the risks these practices can pose for their health and their future. "Girls' bodies are not ready for childbirth, but we do not all know this and our communities do not understand," an Indian girl in the 13–15 age group explained. A girl roughly the same age in Nigeria demonstrated the physical and emotional impact of traditional practices in her community: "Girls that are forced to marry young are more likely to have fistulas; when this happens, their husband will send them back." Girls believed that those who had experienced such traditional practices could be affected by feelings of depression and suicide. A girl from the 13–15 age group in India talked about the problem of rape and male dominance in her area: "There are many women's issues in villages—women are committing suicide."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls' hopes and dreams often featured wishes for more advanced healthcare, and to be part of the solution. A girl in the 13–15 age group in Ethiopia summed up this attitude: "I want to become a doctor and diagnose sick people. I want to give free advice and medication for those who can't afford it." In Kenya, a girl about the same age expressed a thirst for access to health information: "I would love to be taught about HIV and AIDS because it is killing a lot of people in our area." Girls were aware that they are often misinformed about health matters due to cultural taboos, and wanted to be able to seek out accurate health information for themselves, particularly around sex, critical illness and reproduction.

Girls also wanted greater access to healthcare facilities and professionals in their communities. A girl in the 13–15 age group in Nigeria said, "I want a hospital for the sick, and for those who now have to give birth on their way to the hospital because there is currently no hospital in our town."

Girls felt driven to provide members of their family with financial support for their own healthcare. "I wish that I could have a greater income that I can support myself and my mother and get her medicine," one Egyptian in the 16–19 age group expressed. They also wanted others to be provided for: "We want free medicine for girls living with HIV/AIDS," a Liberian girl in the 13–15 age group said.

Girls wanted healthier options for their personal hygiene, sanitation, water and food, and they saw these challenges as barriers. "I want to be able to eat rice with fish and chicken, not on its own," said one Indonesian girl in the 10–12 age group.

Girls wanted to end harmful traditional practices, which they see as a major threat to their wellbeing. "I hate FGM. It has caused many deaths. I have witnessed girls in our area undergoing FGM, and she really bled and died, so this is quite detrimental to our girls," a Kenyan in the 13–15 age group explained.

GIRLS' EMOTIONS

BACKGROUND

Throughout the consultation, girls gave voice to the emotional implications of the challenges they faced in their lives. Just as adolescent girls are forming their own identities, they are taught that their own needs, desires and aspirations are subordinate to others—stunting girls' progress and causing lasting damage to their sense of self-worth and empowerment. While seldom addressed in development programs and policies, girls' mental and emotional health is critically important to their current and future well-being.[118] Good emotional health has positive implications for overall well-being, growth and development, self-esteem, behavior, attendance and performance at school, social cohesion and resilience in the face of future health and life changes.[119]

Adolescence is a period of emotional instability, and in any given year, twenty percent of adolescents experience a mental health problem, most commonly depression or anxiety.[120] In many places, suicide is among the leading cause of death among young people.[121] Experiences of violence, humiliation, devaluation and poverty increase these risks.[122] Depression rates among women are twice as high as among men.[123] This gender difference first emerges during adolescence and the likelihood of recurrence during adulthood is related to adolescent onset.[124] Researchers have suggested that, as girls make transitions towards adulthood, they become increasingly aware of the gendered differences and expectations between themselves and their male peers, making them more at risk for depression.[125]

Girls living in poverty often manage multiple stresses in addition to being poor, like hunger, malnutrition, overwork and domestic violence.[126] One in four children lives in dangerous and unstable conditions.[127] War and catastrophic natural disasters increase their vulnerability to various forms of violence, leaving them with intense feelings of anxiety and fear as a result of their experiences.[128] Natural disasters and conflicts destabilize social infrastructure, exposing girls to increased sexual violence, exploitative labor and trafficking.[129] Young people living in refugee camps and urban slums, or working as child soldiers, are even more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, coercion and violence. They are also more likely to engage in high risk or transactional sex for survival.[130] Experiences of sexual and physical violence can have severe mental health consequences. For example, the mental health consequences of rape include major depression, anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and problems with addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.[131]

Furthermore, psychosocial support services are often extremely limited. In most developing countries there are few mental health professionals available to young, poor people, and non-specialist health workers are often not equipped to provide the help young people need. Even if services are available, the stigma associated with such health issues make it rare that girls and their families seek out care.[132]

Addressing the mental health of adolescents, and particularly adolescent girls, requires understanding how adolescents define their needs, in addition to understanding the perceptions and biases of parents, service providers, policy-makers and other adults.[133] Adolescent propensity to seek out mental health treatment varies greatly by context and culture. For example, in much of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, internalized gender norms—especially with regards to the taboos and restrictions on sexual behavior and mobility—can limit young women's ability to seek help. Location also matters; young people living in urban areas have higher levels of depression and distress.[134]

In spite of these challenges, many adolescents who face great adversity in childhood can still thrive. These adolescents utilize the assets they have, such as high levels of self-esteem or an adult mentor, to avoid some of the negative outcomes of poverty.[135] Believing in their ability to resolve problems may result in more help-seeking, but this varies tremendously by individual.[136] Supportive families, schools and peers are critical to helping young people develop.[137]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

During the consultations, girls talked about the emotional impact of the challenges they face; feelings of sadness, isolation, low self-esteem and stress were all aired. A girl in the 13–15 age group from Rwanda asked, "Do people know that poor people like us exist?" From as young as ten, girls expressed feelings of low self-worth, often emanating from the unequal treatment of girls and boys within the family. Girls experienced many problems, ranging from the everyday to the severe, which was encapsulated by an Egyptian girl in the 16–19 age group:

> *I wish that the state of the country would stabilize; that we would not fear tomorrow, that the life would be better in general; that the surgery of my brother Mahmoud would succeed; and that mum would trust me; and my fiancé would love and care for me the same way that I love and care for him.*

Although experienced by girls of all ages, stress and isolation were particularly evident among girls in the transition age between thirteen and fifteen, as they began to realize the barriers that they would face in fulfilling their dreams for their futures. Girls did not always feel emotionally equipped to deal with these changes, which included the loss of educational opportunity, a pending marriage and jobs. This was demonstrated by a girl in DRC, who revealed: "During the two years I didn't go to school, I just stayed at home. It made me very unhappy… All I ever really did was chores around the house. Sometimes I needed to escape to the nearby countryside, just to get away. I was really sad."

Girls also talked about particularly traumatic periods in their lives. In these instances, girls sometimes felt they lacked the support networks to deal with such events, which could exacerbate feelings of depression and even suicide. This is demonstrated by the story of a Pakistani girl, told during a consultation of the 16–19 age group: "A boy posted pictures of her walking around the community on Facebook. Her father, brothers and others in the community turned on her, and she tried to commit suicide." While girls in all countries experienced emotional stress and loss, the events and life changes that prompted them often varied. Girls' concerns about early marriage or political conflict, for instance, were much more common in some countries than in others. An Indonesian girl in the 13–15 age group remarked, "'I don't want to get married young as I see how unhappy my sister is, but the boys mock us for hanging around with girls and not having boyfriends."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Ultimately, girls wanted to be happier, emotionally resilient and to feel supported by those around them. Girls recognized that part of this was just about bringing some levity and fun into their lives. One girl in the 13–15 age group in Pakistan showed such joy in playing games during the workshop, remarking, "I haven't played a game in two years." In addition to this, girls wanted to have people they could talk to that understood their emotions. A girl in Ethiopia in the 13–15 age group reflected, "It's sad that girls can't talk to their families about their worries." Most importantly, girls wanted extra support during times of change, including around puberty, when they are leaving school, at the time of marriage and after a traumatic event.

EDUCATION

Of all the topics raised by girls, they discussed the importance of education most frequently and most passionately. Education is a basic human right that has been universally recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and reaffirmed by numerous international conventions and national constitutions around the world. In addition to being a fundamental and freestanding right,

education is also an enabling right, because it "creates the 'voice' through which rights can be claimed and protected."[138] Education is also associated with a range of positive development outcomes. In recognition of the profound impact that education has on individual and global development, education is one of the core commitments of the MDGs.

Education has profound importance for girls—not only during childhood and adolescence, but throughout their lives. Girls acquire knowledge, skills and experience in school, which prepares them for healthier and safer transitions to adulthood. Education is associated with delayed sexual initiation, delayed marriage and pregnancy, lower rates of HIV and overall improved health status, smaller family size, and improved economic status.[139] School can also facilitate positive relationships between boys and girls during a critical phase of their transition to adulthood.[140] At the societal level, these benefits accumulate as lower fertility levels, decreased maternal and child mortality rates, economic security, gender equity and democratization. For example, more than half of the reduction in child mortality between 1970 and 2009 can be attributed to women's increased educational attainment.[141]

There have been notable gains in girls' and women's educational status in the last four decades. Access to education has increased in most regions, and many countries and regions have reached gender parity in primary education. Globally, 57 million primary school age children were out of school in 2011, and 69 million young adolescents (between 12 and 15) around the world were not attending primary or secondary school.[142] Sixty-eight countries have not reached parity in primary education; in sixty of those, girls are disadvantaged. In some regions, the differences are greater: for example, in western and central Africa, the net primary enrollment ratio from 2003 to 2008 was seventy-one percent for boys, compared to sixty-four percent for girls.[143]

Even when girls stay enrolled in school, they do not always attend consistently; one study of forty countries found that poor rural girls had attendance rates of less than fifty percent in almost every country.[144] Low attendance rates can be attributed in part to the fact that girls often shoulder greater responsibilities at home than their brothers and male peers. For example, in Guinea Bissau girls work an average of eight hours per day on household chores, compared to three hours for boys.[145] These domestic obligations also mean that girls' time to spend on homework is often more limited than boys.

In most regions, the gaps between boys and girls increase with educational level. At the secondary level, ninety-seven countries have not reached gender parity; in forty-three of them (particularly the regions of Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa), girls are disadvantaged.[146] The transition from primary to secondary level is especially fraught with challenges for girls, and tends to coincide with biological and social transitions when girls stop being viewed and treated as children and start taking on adult responsibilities of caretaking and parenting.

A lack of schools, qualified teachers, transportation or financial resources to pay for school can affect both boys and girls in low-resource settings. However, in many settings where these supply-side barriers exist, male children are favored over girl children to attend school because of social, cultural and economic factors. In some contexts, parents have stated that where there are limited resources for schooling, sons will be sent over daughters. Gender and poverty often interact to girls' disadvantage: in the poorest and most rural settings, girls are usually less likely to be in school, and the gaps between the wealthiest boys and the poorest girls are often stark.[147]

Violence is a major barrier to girls' educational attainment, particularly as it manifests in multiple ways to interfere with educational goals—at home, on the way to or from school and within the school environment itself. When girls are facing violence at home, they are less likely to be physically or mentally able to do well in school. The use or threat of violence may be used to keep girls out of school or otherwise socially isolated. Girls regularly face threats of violence in public places, and violence within the school environment—from fellow students, teachers, administrators or other staff—is all too common. A recent nationwide study in Tanzania reported that three of every ten Tanzanian females ages 12–24 had been victims of sexual violence, and of these, almost twenty-five percent reported an incident occurring while traveling to or from school, while fifteen percent reported an incident occurring at school or on school grounds.[148] A similar study in Kenya found that females and males ages 18–24 who had experienced unwanted sexual touching most

often reported that the incident occurred in school.[149] The actual or perceived risk of violence to girls is a common reason cited by girls and parents for keeping their daughters out of school, particularly if the distance between home and school is great.

Other supply-side barriers include inadequate sanitation facilities, which disproportionately disadvantage girls. While the relative importance of this factor compared to other factors like poverty, parental support and social norms are debated, when girls do not have adequate and private facilities for menstrual hygiene, they may miss class or drop out of school.[150]

In most places, marriage and/or motherhood make it nearly impossible for girls to continue their schooling. Globally, girls with no education are three times more likely to marry as children than those who complete primary or higher levels of education.[151] Even where formal marital unions are not the norm, non-marital sexual relationships put girls at greater risk for pregnancy, which often leads to school dropout. Girls may engage in transactional sex to earn money to pay for school fees and other expenses, putting them at increased risk for violence, pregnancy and HIV or other STIs—all of which increase the likelihood of school dropout. Furthermore, even where marriage, pregnancy or risky sexual activity do not precede school dropout, evidence suggests that gendered social norms prioritizing women's domestic, sexual and reproductive roles limit investments in their education beyond the basic level.[152]

All of these factors can be exacerbated in contexts of conflict or environmental disasters. Half of the world's out-of-school population lives in conflict-affected countries, and a disproportionate number of them (fifty-five percent) are girls.[153] Conflict and disasters significantly disrupt educational opportunities for both girls and boys in multiple ways—by destroying school and transportation facilities and infrastructure, by making it unsafe for students and staff to travel to and from school, and by displacing families and communities. At times, schools and students can become deliberate targets. In contexts where educated girls disrupt the status quo of gendered power relations, girls in school uniforms can become powerful political targets—as evidenced by the 2012 shooting of Malala Yousafzai by Taliban gunmen in the Swat Valley of Pakistan.

Furthermore, it is not only access, but educational quality, that is of concern for girls around the world. UNESCO estimates that 250 million children are failing to read or write by the time that they should be in grade four.[154] A shortage of skilled teachers, learning materials, early childhood education and appropriate and relevant curricula are a few of the many factors that are contributing to poor learning outcomes. According to the first report of the Global Education First Initiative, "We have a learning deficit that poses huge challenges for development. The failure to invest simultaneously in access and quality of education has created a world in which at least an estimated 250 million children are not able to read, write or count well even for those who have spent at least four years in school."[155]

Reading, writing and counting are the building blocks of a good education, but they may not be sufficient to empower young people and transform their circumstances. If teachers or administrators maintain authoritarian roles and express values or beliefs that discriminate against girls, they can exclude or discourage girls' participation, and perpetuate discriminatory norms among students.[156] A quality education will promote critical thinking, self-awareness and creativity that will allow girls to challenge harmful gender norms and go beyond the status quo. It will also provide skills and information that are relevant to girls' lives in a safe, girl-friendly environment.[157] "Multidimensional educational investments" will provide girls with a broad range of competencies, including critical thinking and learning, while challenging traditional gender norms and structures.[158]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Education was the single most important issue raised by girls in the consultations, in every setting and across every age group. It is a core issue that girls felt was deeply important to their lives. As a Chinese girl in the 13–15 age group expressed, "I feel happy and safe when I'm at school; it protects you from things that happen in the world."

Girls talked about education with passion and hope, making it the most frequently mentioned theme across all countries, and both by

girls who were in school and those who were not. Girls who were still in school noted that they hoped to continue with their education: "I want to finish my education before I get married so that I can support myself and not rely on my husband," explained a Nigerian girl in the 13–15 age group. Girls who no longer attended school wanted to return: "I pray that I can go back to school and get an education, if God wishes," said a Rwandan girl of similar age. A girl in the same age group from India said, "I watch children go to school every day and wish I could be one of them. I feel sad that I am not at school."

Girls asserted that education was the path to greater opportunities in work and life. One girl in the 16–19 age group from DRC announced: "I know that because of my studies today, I will play a big role tomorrow. It will be my responsibility to support my family." Girls talked about the practical and emotional consequences of leaving school, like losing the chance to get a job and achieve a better life, becoming an adult sooner, spending limited time with peers and experiencing a lowered self-esteem.

Girls saw many barriers to a good education, and as such, they often felt that they were getting a basic education at best. Good quality teaching was not guaranteed; girls talked about teachers being corrupt, poorly trained and failing to show up for class. In Egypt, girls said that they were sometimes forced to pay teachers private tuition fees, while in Nigeria, girls criticized a system that allows teachers with no qualifications to be appointed to schools simply because they are friends with the community leader. "I wish that teachers were provided in all government schools and those who remain absent should have their positions terminated," said a Pakistani girl in the 13–15 age group. A Nigerian girl of about the same age faced equally dismal instructors: "The books are provided by the government, and marked 'not for sale,' but the teachers make us pay for them." Girls worried, even if they stayed in school longer, that they might not progress far enough to be awarded high school certificates, without which higher education or more professional and lucrative jobs were unattainable.

Many girls said that they had dropped out of school early—often before state-subsidized education ended—because of economic and social reasons. "My problem is the tuition fee. I always cry because we don't have money. We have to choose between school and a bag of rice," explained a girl in the 13–15 age group from the Philippines. Even in countries where education was state-funded, girls said extra costs associated with schooling—such as exam fees, books, travel and uniforms—were prohibitive for their families. As explained by one young girl in the 13–15 age group in Indonesia: "My shoes wear out in about a month because I have to walk a long way to school and the roads are bad. If my shoes wear out and we can't afford new ones, I can't go to school." Some girls had to find ways to earn additional income so as to afford their educations: "I have to hawk to earn money to pay the corrupt fees that teachers charge. It's very dangerous, lots of girls get raped," a girl from the 10–12 age group in Nigeria explained.

Girls also said that the roles and expectations of adolescent girls at home prevent them from getting a good education. "After school I go to work in the field, so I don't have enough time to study," said an Indian girl in the 10–12 age group. Girls said parents and/ or husbands often expect them to prioritize domestic duties such as caring for siblings, cooking and cleaning, or in some cases earning money, which makes it difficult for girls to attend school. "My parents want me to be educated, but I don't have time to go to school; I have eight siblings to look after," reported a Pakistani girl on the 16–19 age group. One Indian girl in the 13–15 age group explained her parents' views on education: "They say that it's better to educate my brother because I'll get married."

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls wanted their time in education extended, and to see more opportunities for the future. Girls recognized two key benefits in education: First, it protects them from adulthood, affording them time to be a child with fewer responsibilities. Second, it prepares them for the future, giving them skills and confidence to be an adult in the community.

I feel that life can be especially pitiful, without money to go to school and living in a house with holes. —China, age 10-12

I wish I could have a decent education and wish that no one could control my personality. I wish to go to a decent school and I wish teachers would not humiliate us and give us a proper education. —Egypt, age 13 to 15

If I'm educated, then if my son tries to kick me out of the house, I'll be able to argue against him. —India, age 13 to 15

We need public universities. We need things to keep our mind occupied, to amuse ourselves to enjoy childhood. —Brazil, age 13 to 15

I want the international community to help build schools in our community. —Liberia, age 10 to 12

I'm asking for peace and free education for girls in particular, just like in other countries where girls can go to school for free. —DRC, age 16 to 19

Some girls wanted to finish high school and enter the workforce so they could help others. "In the name of God, I dream to enter high school and to graduate in to the university and become a lawyer so that I can defend the poor and needy," said an Egyptian girl in the 16–19 age group. In the Philippines, a girl in the 10–12 age group said, "My dream is to become a teacher so that I can help my parents, so our family can overcome poverty. A Kenyan girl in the 16–19 age group said, "I wish I could complete my studies and become someone important in the future that I help my fellow girls to prosper in the future." And an Ethiopian of the same approximate age said, "I want to create a generation that is educated and eradicate child labor and exploitation in Ethiopia."

Girls' needs and hopes for education changed as they got older. As they enter the transitional age from thirteen to fifteen, girls talked about starting to fall behind or even out of school, and become worried about the impact this could have on their future. Older girls desire more vocational education such as hairdressing, sewing and entrepreneurial skills that will prepare them to find future employment. A Chinese girl in the 13–15 age group recognized the benefits of professional training: "I wish I could learn how to be a hairdresser at school, as this would prepare me better for life." However, girls also recognize the barriers. Participating in training takes time away from domestic chores that families rely on. One Pakistani girl in the 16–19 age group summed up one of these challenges: "I go to stitching classes, but if my parents aren't home to look after my siblings, I can't go."

JOBS AND MONEY

The economic status of girls is a topic of great concern. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares the right of everyone to the "economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality."[159] Recent high-level policy documents have recommended that increasing global attention be paid to ensuring that girls and women have the right to property and land protected, an increased voice in economic and political life, equal access to financial services, equal pay for equal work, and secure jobs with more social benefits.[160]

One-sixth of the world's young people live on less than two dollars a day, including 122 million girls in Sub-Saharan Africa who live on less than one dollar a day.[161] From 1995–2005, youth unemployment grew to 85 million,[162] with 35.6 million young women ages 15 to 24 seeking employment in 2006 alone.[163] At the national level, this translates to a significant impact on economic growth. Although youth and girl-focused programs have promoted education and reproductive health, funders and organizations are increasingly exploring strategies to provide girls with solid economic opportunities, both as a means for ensuring current access to assets and as future employees, investors and entrepreneurs.[164]

Young people, in many settings, take on the dual responsibility of education and employment (both in the informal and formal sectors). As they transition through adolescence, the balance between work and education shifts—young men and women aged 10 to 14 are involved in less economic activity or domestic work, and have higher levels of school enrollment than those aged 15 to 17.[165] Quite simply, as adolescents transition to adulthood, they leave educational opportunities for economic ones.[166]

It is difficult to get reliable data on girls' work, in large part because much of it is unpaid.[167] What is known is that in many countries, more boys (in both rural and urban settings) than girls earn money.[168] Also, poverty requires many young people to work at even younger ages, and girls, in particular, seem to bear the brunt of these hard times, leaving school for low-skill, low-paying work. The younger a working adolescent is, the more likely she is to be involved in child labor and hazardous work.[169] Traditional gender roles influence the type of work that is acceptable for young boys and girls, which also affects their earning potential. For example, boys and young men in Bangladesh primarily work in fishing, wooden furniture manufacture, construction, retail and transport, while girls work in textiles, handicrafts and private household services, which offer lower wages.[170]

Girls also spend more time on chores and have a higher domestic burden.[171] Depending on the context, girls spend between thirty-three and ninety-six percent more time every day working at home than boys of the same age. While boys study, play or relax, the girls are doing the cooking, cleaning, fetching the water and firewood, and caring for the family.[172] This domestic burden restricts their opportunities outside the home, particularly with regards to education, social interaction and economic opportunities, especially during times of economic shock and poverty.[173] In Mexico, less than forty percent of girls aged 12 to 14 who work twenty or more hours per week at home also attend school.[174] Girls who had younger siblings were more likely to not attend school. In fact, a ten percent increase in childcare costs in Kenya saw a three percent decline in older girls' school enrollment.[175] This lack of education and social capital leads girls to the informal sector, channeling them into low-skilled jobs that are characterized by low pay, long hours and the kind of unequal power relations that lead to exploitation.[176]

Employment in the informal economy is estimated to account for half to three-quarters of all non-agricultural employment in developing countries. The data on participation in the informal labor force is even less reliable, especially for girls working in the informal economy. It is known, however, that of the women working in informal settings, most are self-employed, home-based workers or street vendors, working without the protections that many in the formal sector enjoy.[177] Rural, poor women are heavily involved in economic activities, but their contributions are often invisible. Eighty percent of rural households rely on farming for income, meals and basic survival, and women or girls generally handle forty-three percent of farming and virtually all housework.[178] Girls and women spend an extraordinary amount of time on activities that contribute to their family's income and wellbeing, but these activities often go unrecognized and unpaid. Furthermore, the amount of time girls have to spend contributing to housework and household livelihoods reduces the time they are able to spend investing in their own education and future potential.

Employment of young women continues to lag behind their male peers. Globally in 2010, 56.3 percent of young males participated in the labor force, versus 40.8 percent of young females.[179] When young women do participate in labor markets, they encounter higher unemployment than their male peers, and are more likely to be in traditionally female occupations, which tend to be unstable, part-time and lower-paid. Young women are also, in much of the world, paid significantly less than men. In sub-Saharan Africa young women aged 15 to 24 earn eighty-two percent of what men do.[180]

Globalization, migration and increased urbanization have yielded more economic opportunity, and adolescent girls and young women are increasingly entering the workforce and contributing to widespread economic growth. Although more boys are migrating than girls, both tend to find work in unregulated, but different, industries, concentrating their work in low-skill and pay jobs.[181] Girls are more vulnerable than their male counterparts, especially in their first few years in a new setting, or when they have been displaced due to conflict.[182] They earn less than boys and work longer hours, which affects their social capital. For example, in Ethiopia, forty percent of migrant girls report having no friends, versus thirteen percent of boys.[183] Their isolation puts them at risk for exploitation and violence.

The growing evidence base clearly highlights the reason to focus on economically empowering adolescent girls. Ensuring economic opportunities for all could greatly impact the lives of girls, their families, communities and countries. Access to physical and financial assets is associated with a girl having a more positive outlook on her life and future plans, being less likely to engage in risky behavior and being more likely to delay marriage and have fewer children.[184] When added to education, the impact is even greater: a mother with a few years of formal education is considerably more likely to send her children to school.[185]

Providing economic opportunities to girls can have a positive impact on girls' lives; however, this access can compete with and detract from educational goals. Ideally, economic opportunities will follow or complement, not replace, education through at least the secondary level, and should prepare girls to succeed in the labor market. Furthermore, lack of education can stifle girls' ability to access employment information and to enter and grow within the workforce. Recognizing the points at which girls can and should have access to different types of economic opportunities, while ensuring that they continue to receive an education, may further expand their horizons.[186]

WHAT GIRLS THINK

Girls felt that they were unable to access good job opportunities due to their lack of education, restrictive expectations placed on them and a lack of awareness of the different paths and opportunities available to them.

The girls all expressed a desire to provide for themselves and their families by working in "good jobs," e.g., skilled, stable jobs that did not put them in danger and allowed them to make a living. Girls recognized that the lack of training and qualifications that they had limited their access to employment. Girls often talked about how they had dropped out of school early, or that even when they hadn't, they couldn't afford the exam or certificate fees, and as a result had no diplomas.

Access to resources and money were also often cited by girls as reasons for not being able to work in the jobs they wanted. Many girls recognized that limited funds for start-up costs, such as purchasing tools, were preventing them from even entering some jobs. Many felt inhibited by the inadequate access to basic resources needed to work. One Nigerian girl in the 13–15 age group with aspirations to become a tailor expressed this limitation: "Some jobs need light and we don't have reliable electricity. I can't sew in the dark."

Other major limiting factors for girls in securing economic opportunities related to societal expectations of girls. Many girls felt that they were expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities, while boys were expected to pursue paid work. Girls often said that certain jobs were reserved for boys, and not meant for girls. Furthermore, as a girl in Egypt's 13–15 age group said, "Many employers feel like boys will work harder than girls because they don't have to take care of the family, so they only hire boys. Some work dictates the need to travel or stay overnight, so this is not allowed."

The result of this lack of access to employment opportunities meant that girls often found themselves unemployed or in low-skilled and unsafe jobs, from working in tea-shops and street stalls, to laboring in the fields, to domestic work, sewing and handcrafts. Some girls felt they had been forced to work illegally and talked of how this had affected them. An Egyptian girl in the 16–19 age group said, "I suffered in my life because I have been working since I was twelve. I was working as a maid and I was humiliated for getting this money."

Girls were further limited by lack of awareness of the options available to them beyond typical roles like teacher, doctor and nurse. In the absence of more varied role models, they often aspired to jobs they are familiar with, but for which they may not have been qualified. A girl in Egypt in the 13–15 age group said, "I wish I could become a doctor to help the poor, cure diseases and discover cures for dangerous illnesses".

THE CHANGES GIRLS WANT TO SEE

Girls expressed the desire for more from their job prospects. Many girls talked about the need to be financially independent:

I want to be a doctor so that I can treat my father who has a tumour and so we'll be rich. —Philippines, age 10 to 12

I would like to work as an engineer in the future. There will be competition from both girls and boys. People will assume that those kinds of boys jobs belong to men, but girls can pursue that kind of work too. —DRC (age unknown)

I want to be a teacher so I can teach children how to read and write. —Liberia, age 10 to 12

I wish I could become a doctor to help the poor and the needy, cure diseases and discover cures for dangerous illnesses. —Egypt, age 13 to 15

I want to stand on my own two feet, not be dependent. Please let me be home for some years before marrying me off. —India, age 16 to 19

Ultimately, what girls wanted was to secure good jobs that better their own lives and the lives of others. Many girls discussed their aspirations to gain respect, security and independence through employment. One Ethiopian girl expressed her desires in this area, saying: "My wish is to be an entrepreneur and become self-employed so that I can create jobs for the youth. I would be very happy to see them to see them avoid the stress of job seeking." An Egyptian girl in the 16–19 age group expressed similarly lofty ambitions: "I wish to become an engineer and to have a lot of money and to travel all around the world and help poor and needy people."

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS ON GIRLS' ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Girls have the right to health, education, and economic opportunities. Adolescence provides a window of opportunity to ensure girls can access those rights, as well as the assets that they need to act on opportunities. Their physical and mental health is fundamental and must be protected and nurtured. Their education—from childhood all the way through their adolescence—must be fostered as a channel for acquiring not only knowledge, but also critical thinking skills, social competencies and exposure to new ideas and opportunities. During adolescence, girls should be provided with the information, training and skills they need to be financially literate and to prepare for future employment. All of these are fundamental components to sustainable development goals. To reach them, the following actions should be taken:

Protect girls' health. Adolescent girls—whether married or not, in-school or out-of-school—must have access to safe, age-appropriate health and nutrition information and services. Youth-friendly health information and services should include comprehensive life skills-based sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health that is appropriate for their age and developmental stage.

Girls need health programs appropriate for their age and context. The diversity of adolescents must be taken into account when addressing health issues. Girls living in rural and urban communities may encounter distinct challenges in regard to environmental health, accidents, injuries or risk factors for NCDs. Ethnic minorities, lesbian, transgender or displaced adolescent girls may find themselves even more marginalized by the health system than their ethnic majority, straight or statically located peers.

Prioritize mental health. To date, insufficient attention has been given to the psychological health of adolescents. The multiple challenges that girls face place an enormous burden on their mental and psychological health, which profoundly affects their capacity to learn, work and participate fully in community life. This is particularly true for survivors of violence, displaced and conflict-affected girls and other socially excluded girls. Mental health should be prioritized on the global development agenda, and psychosocial support services should be designed to take age, gender and multiple forms of vulnerability into account.

End harmful traditional practices. FGM and child marriage must be stopped. Girls who have been married or cut should be provided with health and social services to maximize their health and economic opportunities.

Ensure girls complete high-quality education at least at the secondary level. Though progress has been made on girls' primary school enrollment under the MDGs, there are still tens of millions of girls of primary school age who are not in school, and who are among the most marginalized members of society. Getting all girls into school is an unfinished agenda from the current MDGs that must be prioritized. Furthermore, primary education is insufficient to unleash the potential of girls. Girls should complete school through at least the secondary level, which will include relevant non-formal or vocational opportunities. In order for these goals to be fulfilled, financial, legal and normative barriers to accessing school must be addressed. School environments must be "girl-friendly," at the very least, and as a first order, violence in and around schools must be eliminated.

Ensure girls learn. Access to and completion of school will not guarantee that girls acquire the knowledge, skills and networks that they need to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political life. A multidimensional education will provide girls with a broad range of competencies that will empower them to transform their own lives and their communities.

Provide tailored economic empowerment programs. Economic programs and services must be relevant for the age, developmental stage, social context and labor market in which girls live. Age-appropriate financial services, linked with real market needs and opportunities that address the multiple factors that shape girls' lives, can empower girls and young women.[187] Economic empowerment programs should complement school: after-school tutoring and mentoring programs, financial literacy programs, internships, apprenticeships and other training opportunities can enhance what girls gain in the classroom.

Promote an enabling legal framework. Legal frameworks should protect girls' rights to work and to earn equal pay for equal work, and should guarantee safe working conditions free of coercion, violence or exploitation. Additionally, girls' and women's rights to own and inherit property must be protected.

CONCLUSION

Five hundred and eight adolescent girls have shared their insights for how to build a better world. They have shown that they have the ideas, the energy, and the vast potential to help solve global problems, but they also explained that they face serious challenges.

In the consultations, girls from ages 10 to 19 told us that, first and foremost, their identities as girls are being threatened, marginalized and constrained. Too many girls are born as if they are invisible, lacking even the most basic forms of legal identity or proof of citizenship. Other girls are marginalized in more subtle ways: as they transition from childhood into adolescence, they are expected to stay at home, out of sight, their dreams and priorities subverted in service to others. They are forced to marry as children, going from child to wife without having gained the basic skills, competencies and agency that would allow them to make different choices for their lives. Girls' hopes and dreams, however, are not limited by others' narrow expectations of them: they passionately express their commitment to their communities and countries. They want to contribute, to give back, and to be recognized as people with value and worth. They want to be involved in the choices that affect them, especially when and whom to marry.

In order for girls' potential to be unleashed, their social and physical environments must be safer, healthier and more supportive. Girls expressed their need to live free from fear. Violence at home, in schools and in neighborhoods violates girls' most basic rights and holds them back from a multitude of opportunities. Inextricably connected to violence is social isolation. The girls also discussed the importance of friendship with other girls, which many of them did not have because of restrictions on their time and their autonomy. They also discussed the value and the difficulty in being part of close-knit families and communities: they rely on their family and community members for support, but they also feel judged and controlled by them. In their physical environment, girls also described the difficulty of living in areas affected by pollution, poor sanitation and insecurity, and expressed their desire and ideas for improvements. Girls want to play an active part in improving their environments, and they need to be equipped to do so.

Girls discussed the assets and opportunities that are most precious to them. Their physical and emotional health is a precondition for participation in most other aspects of life, and girls expressed the difficulty of accessing healthcare services and information. Girls who face the near-term prospects of marriage and childbirth are particularly concerned about how they will access quality healthcare. They spoke about how traditional practices such as FGM and child marriage hurt and constrain them. Girls also expressed the emotional hardships that they face, including feelings of sadness, isolation, low self-esteem and even trauma. While many of the younger girls expressed unbridled optimism for their futures, girls in their middle or later adolescence spoke about their doubts and fears about what the future would hold for them.

Education was the single-most frequently discussed topic among girls in the Post-2015 Adolescent Girl Consultations. Girls spoke about education with passion and with hope, and saw it is a channel for accessing many other opportunities in life. Their pursuit of education is challenged by financial hardship and by social norms that disparage the value of girls' education. Nevertheless, girls of every age in every country expressed the desire for more education, explaining that it extends their childhoods, protects them from harm and gives them an opportunity to develop the skills and assets to be productive and empowered adults and citizens.

Girls want to provide for themselves and their families, and they highlighted the importance of having good jobs and access to financial resources. They expressed the challenges and fears they have in finding a good job, due to a lack of quality education, and the attitudes of others that undervalue their potential contributions to the economy. At the same time, they articulated great hopes for their future, and expressed a desire for the information and support to achieve them.

Today, as global decision makers assess where we are with respect to the MDGs, and begin to chart a new path for the post-2015 world, it is clear that the needs and rights of girls must be prioritized. Girls and their champions have developed a Girl Declaration, calling for global decision makers to adopt the following goals, each of which includes a specific and measurable target:

>   **GOAL 1—EDUCATION:** Adolescent girls reach adulthood with relevant skills and knowledge to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

>   **GOAL 2—HEALTH:** Adolescent girls have access to safe, age-appropriate health and nutrition information and services and possess the confidence they need to make healthy transitions to adulthood.

>   **GOAL 3—SAFETY:** Adolescent girls are free from violence and exploitation and are supported by enforced laws, strong and adequately resourced child protection systems and their communities.

>   **GOAL 4—ECONOMIC SECURITY:** Adolescent girls know how to build and protect their economic assets and transition to adulthood with the skills, including technical and vocational, needed to earn a safe and productive income. Governments, communities and the private sector respect and uphold girls' economic rights.

>   **GOAL 5—CITIZENSHIP:** Adolescent girls have equal access to services, opportunities, legal rights and personal freedom, and thus are able to fully participate as citizens of their communities and countries.

After years of progress toward the recognition of girls' intrinsic value and importance, we have arrived at a pivotal moment in the human rights and development field. This is the moment to prove to girls that their hopes and dreams are not in vain. This is the moment to not only listen to them, but to let them be part of the solution to the world's problems. This is the moment to let girls build a better world.

ENDNOTES

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