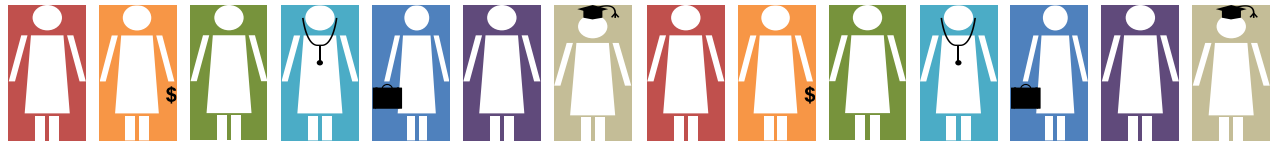


United Nations Foundation
Landscape Analysis of the Adolescent Girl Field
Summary Report
March 2013



Women and Population
Adolescent Girl Program
Learning and Planning Process
March 2013

Acknowledgements

With profound gratitude the United Nations Foundation acknowledges the experts from across organizations and areas of expertise that contributed to this report. We appreciate the forthright and unique perspectives shared, which informed the insights collected here and truly improved our understanding of the adolescent girl field and its current challenges and opportunities.



Summary

To inform and refine its adolescent girl program, the United Nations Foundation launched a comprehensive learning and planning process in the fall of 2012 to examine the environment in which it operates and contributes, assess its current strategy and progress, and map potential options for meaningful and effective program investment and action.

As part of this process, the UN Foundation pursued an external landscape analysis to identify the current gaps and opportunities in the adolescent girl field. The investigation benefitted from a stakeholder consultation process that yielded the unique and thoughtful contributions of more than 40 adolescent girl experts working within NGOs, research entities, foundations, corporations, and bilateral and multilateral institutions. The findings were further strengthened by a thorough review of available literature and additional research.

The UN Foundation originally intended to use this limited external landscape analysis internally to guide and strengthen its own planning process. However, and especially since respondents acknowledged a desire for more sharing and better communication between groups, the UN Foundation realized that a brief summary of the landscape analysis findings could be useful for its colleagues. Though it does not include the evaluation of the UN Foundation's ideal role or represent a comprehensive report on the state of the adolescent girl field, it does indicate shared challenges and efforts for which cohesion is essential.

An overview summary of what was pursued and discovered through source interviews – including structural and sectoral themes related to the adolescent girl community, its actors and investments – follows here.



About the United Nations Foundation

The United Nations Foundation builds public-private partnerships to address the world's most pressing problems, and broadens support for the United Nations through advocacy and public outreach. Through innovative campaigns and initiatives, the Foundation connects people, ideas, and resources to help the UN solve global problems. The Foundation was created in 1998 as a U.S. public charity by entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner and now is supported by global corporations, foundations, governments and individuals.

About the UN Foundation's Investment in Women and Girls

The UN Foundation believes that empowering women and girls — providing them with educational and economic opportunities and securing their health and human rights — is essential in the global drive to eliminate poverty, achieve social justice and stabilize the world's population. For fifteen years, the United Nations Foundation has worked with the UN to promote gender equality and empower women and girls, fostering cooperation across UN agencies and linking private sector partners with the UN to advance sexual and reproductive health, including family planning, provide women and girls with economic opportunities and ensure their human rights.

The UN Foundation has invested more than \$51 million in programs that address the rights and needs of adolescent girls since its founding in 1998. Its commitments have led to beneficial policy changes for girls, increased support and investments for comprehensive girl programs, and strengthened the capacity of the UN to meet the needs of girls around the globe.



About the Adolescent Girl Field

In the wake of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, and with growing concern about population momentum in developing countries and high rates of child marriage and early childbearing among large adolescent populations in places like India, demographic and sexual and reproductive health experts realized that global development and empowerment goals could not be achieved without reaching and responding to young people.

The result was an aggregation and synthesis of knowledge in publications about adolescent health and the transition to adulthood in developing countries, as well as an increase in attention, programs and research directed toward adolescent populations in developing countries. But soon research by the Population Council and others began to show that the participants and beneficiaries of “youth” programs were primarily male, and sometimes overwhelmingly so.

The nascent adolescent girl movement emerged from this context and has gained significant momentum since then, benefitting from the energy, expertise and resources of a strong and growing community of dedicated organizations, all of which recognized the “girl gap” in the global development agenda, a social responsibility to girls and the unique potential all girls have to end the cycle of poverty and its consequences in their own lives and communities.

Following here are **only some** of the many *milestones and accomplishments* of the girl community.

- In 1996, the **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)** and its partners launched a ten-year, multi-site, multi-intervention study of youth reproductive health services in rural and urban areas of India.
- In 1998, the **Population Council** published *The Uncharted Passage: Girls' Adolescence in the Developing World*, influencing how policymakers and program managers think about adolescent girls' lives.
- In 1999, the **United Nations** launched its first joint initiative to reach adolescent girls and ensure they could exercise their right to social services. With support from the **UN Foundation**, the UN initiated programs to address the needs of young people in 15 countries, with a special focus on adolescent girls.

In 2001, the **David and Lucile Packard Foundation** funded **Pathfinder International** to conduct a three-year project in Bihar, India, designed to significantly improve the reproductive behavior of

adolescents and young adults. *Promoting Change in Reproductive Behavior in Bihar* or PRACHAR aimed to improve the health and welfare of young mothers and their children in the long-term by changing traditional customs of early childbearing.

- In 2004, following in-depth research in the Amhara region of Ethiopia aimed at identifying underserved subgroups of adolescents, the **Population Council** and the **Amhara Regional Bureau of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs** piloted the *Berhane Hewan* project to keep girls in school, delay early marriage, and address the social isolation of adolescent unmarried and married girls. In 2005, in collaboration with the **Nike Foundation**, the **UN Foundation** began supporting the **UNFPA** and Population Council project. Evaluations of the program found considerable improvements in a range of indicators, including delaying age at marriage. The program was continued with support from **USAID**, the Population Council and the Amhara Regional Bureau of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs. As a result of the success of the *Berhane Hewan* project, the **UK Department for International Development (DFID)**, working with the Nike Foundation, committed to support the Government of Ethiopia to bring the *Berhane Hewan* model to scale, reaching more than 200,000 girls across Ethiopia.
- At the 2005 Clinton Global Initiative, five leaders – Judith Bruce of the **Population Council**, Kathy Bushkin Calvin of the **UN Foundation**, Maria Eitel of the **Nike Foundation**, Adrienne Germain of the **International Women’s Health Coalition**, and Geeta Rao Gupta of **ICRW** – committed to create the *Coalition for Adolescent Girls*. The Coalition has since convened more than 40 leading international organizations with a shared commitment to creating lasting change in developing countries by driving investments to adolescent girls.
- A **World Bank** analysis of Official Development Assistance (ODA) figures from 2005-2006 found that only 2.17 percent of total aid – \$54.3 billion – is directed toward gender equality as a principle objective. Assuming the majority of that aid benefits adult women, less than two cents per dollar of aid is directed to girls.
- *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries* was published in 2005 to summarize the findings of a **National Academies’ National Research Council** and **Institute of Medicine** research panel. The panel warned that poverty is the greatest barrier to making a successful transition to adulthood.
- In 2006, **Save the Children** introduced *Strengthening Girls’ Voices* in Malawi and *Kishoree Kontha* (adolescent girls’ voices) in Bangladesh, projects devoted to empowering adolescent girls through improved skills and access to quality education, health and financial literacy, and funded by the **Nike Foundation**.
- The **United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force** was established in 2007 in partnership with the **UN Foundation** to combine UN expertise and mandates in support the UN system’s efforts to reach marginalized adolescent girls. Co-chaired by **UNFPA** and **UNICEF**, the Task Force includes **UNESCO, UNIFEM, ILO, WHO** and **UNHCR**.
- *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World’s Girls 2007*, the first in a series of annual reports published by **Plan International** examining the rights of girls throughout their childhood, adolescence and as young women, was released.
- The *Adolescent Girl Initiative*, a \$20 million **World Bank** initiative, was launched in October 2008

in partnership with the Nike Foundation. Part of the Bank's Gender Action Plan, the Initiative was created to address the economic needs of adolescent girls and young women in poor or post-conflict countries.

- In 2008, the **Coalition for Adolescent Girls** launched the *Girls Count* series, the first-ever comprehensive research focused exclusively on adolescent girls in developing countries.
- In 2008, the **Nike Foundation** unleashed *The Girl Effect*, a \$100 million initiative led by Nike with support from the **NoVo Foundation**, to help adolescent girls in developing countries bring social and economic change to their families, communities and countries.
- *Because I am a Girl*, a campaign led by **Plan International** and introduced in Canada in 2009 and in the U.S. and globally in 2012, began raising funds for girl-focused programs.
- In 2009, **CARE**, building on its long history of education work and in-depth research into the theory and practice of girls' leadership, introduced its *Girls' Leadership Development* initiative, using its *Girls' Leadership Model* to change the perception of the value of girls in society and girls' understanding and acting with others to realize their rights through ten priority pathways to girls' empowerment.
- The *Adolescent Girls Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI)*, a unique endeavor initiated by the **UN Foundation** and run by the **Public Health Institute**, was created in 2009 to build the capacity of individuals and organizations to advocate for laws, policies and budgets that are favorable for adolescent girls.
- *Girl Hub*, a public-private partnership between **DFID** and the **Nike Foundation**, launched in February 2010 to harness the collective intelligence of girl experts to support organizations and governments to innovate and evolve large-scale development programs to meet girls' needs.
- In March 2010, members of the **United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force** issued a *UN Joint Statement – Accelerating Efforts to Advance the Rights of Adolescent Girls*, pledging to intensify their efforts to fulfill the human rights of adolescent girls by increasing agency support to developing countries to advance key policies and programs that empower the hardest-to-reach adolescent girls.
- In 2010, **ICRW** published *On the Map: Charting the Landscape of Girl Work*, which outlined the programs, organizations and donors engaged in girl work, as well as the policy and program efforts underway and future directions for the field, in order to contribute toward a more strategic and coordinated effort to mobilize additional actors, resources and ideas on behalf of girls around the world.
- In August 2011, a **World Bank** policy research working paper, *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend* was issued, quantifying the significant opportunity cost of girls' exclusion from productive employment and the potential gains in GDP that could be achieved by investing in girls.
- **Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage** was founded in 2011 by **The Elders**, aligning 200 members across more than 40 countries to work to end child marriage.
- In December 2011, the **United Nations General Assembly** approved a resolution to establish the

International Day of the Girl Child “to help galvanize worldwide enthusiasm for goals to better girls’ lives, providing an opportunity for them to show leadership and reach their full potential.”

- **Girl Hub** hosted a *technical experts’ meeting* about adolescent girls in October 2012, convening more than sixty leading experts in the field of adolescent girl research and evaluation to discuss priority research, evidence gaps and methodological issues and inform future adolescent girl research.
- The first **International Day of the Girl Child** was celebrated on October 11, 2012.

The UN Foundation has initiated, supported or celebrated these important developments with privilege and purpose for 15 years, honored to collaborate with our colleagues and contribute to the adolescent girl community’s gains.



Landscape Analysis Objectives, Process and Sources

Objectives

- *Identify*
Identify the most significant opportunities, gaps and emerging themes in the adolescent girl field through stakeholder and source consultation.
- *Assess*
Collect and assess findings to inform the UN Foundation's planning and learning process.

Process & Sources

- *Stakeholder Consultations*
A diverse cohort of more than 40 individual experts representing national governments, NGOs, research institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, foundations and corporations were consulted in interviews that took place in November and December 2012. In addition, the UN Foundation's institutional knowledge and insights were mined through colleague consultations.
- *Literature Review*
More than 20 essential reports and policy briefs from the International Center for Research on Women, the Population Council, the Center for Global Development, USAID and others were reviewed.
- *Desk Research*
Finally, intensive desk research yielded complementary information about additional actors in the adolescent girl field, as well as their priorities, programs and partners.



Structural Themes

Structural themes refer to the challenges and opportunities that organizations and their representatives routinely encounter pursuing adolescent girl work. Stakeholder consultations and the literature review revealed consistent perspectives about nine leading themes:

- *Funding and Donors*
- *Advocacy*
- *Awareness Campaigns*
- *Communication, Collaboration and Convening*
- *Program Models*
- *Evidence*
- *Expertise*
- *Regional Neglect*
- *Urgency and Opportunity*

Each of these themes is summarized below and elaborated with a sample selection of some of the perspectives gathered during the interviews.

Funding and Donors

All stakeholders agree that funding is not sufficient to meet the needs of adolescent girl programs and that money spent is not always invested wisely. Further, these experts consistently lament the lack of funding for the full evaluation of interventions, noting the “chicken and egg” scenario this creates: funders want their investments to achieve impact, but resist funding the evaluations that can verify it.

In addition, these sources consistently remark that programs focused on advocacy and civic participation, sexual and reproductive health, and social norms or the underlying causes of gender disparity, are more difficult to fund.

Encouragingly, one source noted that the increasing prominence of the adolescent girl issues and shifts in USG policy has created an environment in which at least some donors are now asking for girl-focused programs.

Perspectives

“There is this disconnect with donors. It is very hard to raise money and few donors understand and support the good programs and good research, which can cost as much as the program. It is nearly impossible to find donors that will support the magnitude of

funding we need to do this.” (*researcher*)

“The funding level is not even close to what we need, and the US government can’t tell you exactly what we are spending, though they are developing a system. Girls are lumped into the spending for the 15- to 49-year-old age group.” (*advocate*)

“Work that targets underlying causes is the hardest to get funded, especially if it targets boys.” (*NGO*)

“I definitely think that funding has been challenging and has been a bit more limited than for other issues because in the past funding for adolescent girls has often come out of a women and girls’ project or gender project or come out of a youth project.” (*bilateral*)

“Donors also lack staying power. What is happening now is that a donor may see that if someone else is covering a project ... then the donor can and will move on.” (*researcher*)

“Yes, we need more funding, but funding for what? This is why coalition work is so important. We need like-minded organizations to advance an agenda and apply pressure for funding.” (*advocate*)

Advocacy

Some interviewees emphasized that more advocacy could be helpful, but noted a need to better coordinate advocacy efforts and ground them in research. Sources also noted that advocacy is often one of the hardest components to get funded.

In addition, several interview participants noted that in-country and global advocacy work – including efforts to mobilize and equip girls to advocate on their own behalf – can be challenging. The intent of advocacy work is often misunderstood and can be perceived as potentially controversial.

Perspectives

“We think advocacy is important, but it is a loaded word with implications. We work in three languages, and advocacy has negative connotations in some of them.” (*advocate*)

“There has also been a rise in advocacy, with the work UNF has done, the Elders on child marriage, and I think there is always room for more, but research should help drive advocacy, ideally.” (*bilateral*)

“The advocacy route is always interesting and cheaper. There is not enough going on around advocacy for budget and policy.” (*donor*)

“Funding is another challenge. There is so little funding. And it is hard to reach out to new funders because they don’t understand advocacy or they are afraid of it. It’s more controversial than building a clinic, so corporate entities don’t want to touch it. There is so much we could do.” (*advocate*)

“The advocacy has been great, but it hasn’t been coordinated and there isn’t enough funding for the programs being advocated for.” *(multilateral)*

Awareness Campaigns

Many stakeholders are frustrated by the number and scope of awareness campaigns, fearing that they divert funds away from girls and raise awareness only among the already aware. While many interview subjects noted a deep appreciation for the increased visibility that the adolescent girl agenda has earned and a need for more and better persuasion among target audiences and decision-makers, there is general agreement that these efforts should be balanced with tangible, on-the-ground investments in girls.

Perspectives

“... getting resources to the ground is really important. There are too many things going on at 10,000 feet and not near enough on the ground.” *(researcher)*

“If resources are fungible, then building the capacity or programming on the ground is preferred.” *(donor)*

“We’ve spent too much money on the blah, blah, blah.” *(multilateral)*

“I think adolescent girl visibility and advocacy at high levels has reached its max. We now have a core group that tends to just sift around in meetings together.” *(advocate)*

“It makes me crazy to see money spent on media campaigns and then I go to the field and see these poor girls there. We are not doing enough. We are not getting resources to the ground for girls. We are not yet getting tangible results for girls.” *(researcher)*

“Everyone is so excited about the exposure that girls are finally getting, but ... We can get distracted by it. It is not as good in some ways as getting these ideas and commitments into systems.” *(researcher)*

“My concern is that there is a lot of hubbub at the global level and a lot of people on the bandwagon who say they do girl work, but the money is not getting to the girls.” *(researcher)*

“I tend to say the whole issue needs tons more visibility ... and money.” *(donor)*

Communication, Collaboration and Convening

Interview participants also revealed a very strong appetite for more coordination and communication within the adolescent girl community. Sources noted that there is not near enough exchange of lessons learned, data, program models or implementation strategies.

These experts also noted that there are generally no shared definitions, assumptions, objectives and frameworks among this group. What do we mean when we say adolescent girl? Who is she? How old is she? What challenges is she likely to endure? This community would like more collaboration and more shared knowledge, including a concrete business case for girls and a theory of change.

These stakeholders, however, clarified that there was not necessarily a need to create new or parallel structures, saying instead that existing mechanisms, such as the Coalition for Adolescent Girls, could be optimized for collaboration and sharing.

Perspectives

“I agree that we don’t have enough opportunities to convene and learn with each other, to establish a community of practice. But we don’t necessarily need more expensive international meetings to be able to do this.” (*researcher*)

“There is poor communications between groups. I feel like that there is so much of the same work being done that is treading the water. A lot of redundancy, too much of the same things and not enough coordination.” (*advocate*)

“Even beyond a storehouse of documents, it would be great to have a platform for exchanging ideas, a mechanism for people sharing best practices, ideas, to increase information sharing, questioning, the exchange of models.” (*NGO*)

“Where is all this data that already exists? That we are underutilizing? What don’t we know? What are our main priorities? If we could do that in a tight, coordinated way, we could scale faster.” (*donor*)

“We need a girl model. Who she is, what she brings to table, a theory of change, her aspirations, how we can influence her capabilities, support need to grow and learn, improve the environment she is living in, understand the relationships she has to navigate, how they have been set up, how she is moving towards adulthood and beyond, not her as a youth, but as one who is facing early marriage.” (*NGO*)

“Coordination and convening is very important, and including girls voices when we do. And making sure people in the community are represented. At least having a few so their perspective is included.” (*advocate*)

“We have an opportunity. There is a core group of organizations and donors who see girls as important, therefore it feels like there could better coordinated action around investment, use data we have.” (*donor*)

Program Models

There is disagreement among this cohort of stakeholders about sectoral versus multisectoral interventions, or single-issue interventions versus “boutique” programs that address a range of factors that affect adolescent girls’ lives. Advocates for multisectoral programs argue that girls’ needs should be

addressed comprehensively, holistically. While advocates for sectoral interventions agree that such an approach might be preferable in theory, they argue that only a sectoral approach lends itself to the possibility of large-scale programming that can reach a much bigger population of adolescent girls.

Another viewpoint articulated by a few of these contributors is that girls should be integrated into everything the global health and development community is doing already, especially in maternal and child health. Finally, one stakeholder noted that a country's adolescent girl strategy should be comprehensive, but that the implementation of that strategy should be sectoral.

Perspectives

“And we can certainly learn from boutique programs, but we cannot be content to reach only hundreds of girls.” (*researcher*)

“I think we need a multisectoral strategy at the national or provincial level that says ‘this is what’s needed’ and get real specific about which girls, but not with one agency doing it all.” (*donor*)

“We should look at what’s in place, what do we have, and how can we improve it. To say we need a whole new program, whole new money, it ends up being a money shuffle.” (*donor*)

“I’m very skeptical on the boutique programs. They are critical, we support them, because we have to be able to pull out lessons learned. But they are not scalable.” (*donor*)

“We hate to divide a child by sectors, but that is how governments are organized and how we get to scale. Then we can look at program platforms and encourage sectors to work together, because then they will be accountable.” (*multilateral*)

“It is hard to mobilize funds across agencies. The transaction costs make it hard. It is not the best use of funds, although plenty of people will disagree.” (*multilateral*)

“How do we build in girls into large scale existing programs?” (*donor*)

Evidence

According to these interviews, the most pressing issue for the adolescent girl community is a general lack of evidence, including population data, program evaluation data, outcomes data and cost-benefit analyses. Almost every stakeholder said that the state of the current evidence base posed challenges.

On the other hand, a group of these sources said that the absence of a perfect evidence base should not prevent this community from taking action, noting that this is a relatively nascent field that is using fairly ambitious social science methods to investigate an unstable and changing population and that the community has accumulated valuable insights and practices that can be leveraged.

Perspectives

“The lack of long-term monitoring data that yields outcomes weakens our ability to know

whether systems work for anybody.” (researcher)

“What has struck me is that the research of what’s worked and what girls wanted is so flimsy.” (donor)

“Adolescents are absent. They are not counted. Unless age and sex-specific data are available, people are not likely to identify what their particular needs are.” (multilateral)

“We can’t let ourselves off the hook with adolescent girls just because we don’t have all the answers.” (researcher)

“If only we had funding for controls, because then we could say that this kind of program works. Evidence like that would help strengthen the field, but they don’t want to get on board with.” (researcher)

“It feels like there is a pretty moderate amount of data out there. We can’t call it evidence because different organizations have different criteria for evidence. What we do know is that there is a lot of data and knowledge, but it is disparate and underutilized. The strategic communications and amplification of data is weak.” (donor)

“Almost all of our interventions are structural or behavioral. It takes a long time to see the returns of these interventions. And we are testing them on a mobile population – an unstable and developing population. We are using more ambitious social science methods to measure impact on some of the least predictable groups.” (researcher)

“Despite these limitations, we do have a lot of research and practice to build on, and we shouldn’t let ‘lack of evidence’ stand in the way of moving forward with more investments in populations that we know need support. We certainly can’t say that everything is known in the fields of HIV or cancer prevention, or other critical health issues, but that doesn’t stop us from moving forward with research and programs. We can’t let ourselves off the hook with adolescent girls just because we don’t have all the answers.” (researcher)

“The evidence base is not the problem. We can argue that there is a chicken-and-egg thing, but understand that is a red herring. There’s plenty of evidence that you can cobble together and act on.” (donor)

Expertise

These interview sources also note that there is a shortage of expertise in the adolescent girl field and that they feel constrained by the lack of skilled human resources. This lack of know-how may be a circumstance that limits research gains and general progress.

Perspectives

“There are not enough people who know how to do things for girls. There is a significant gap here of individuals who have done enough work – who are really and uniquely qualified to do

this work. When they come to it, it is often by chance. They can be few and far between and hard to find. So we have a human resource constraint.” (*donor*)

“Some of it is basic real training – not a one-time workshop, but real expertise across different professions that focuses on girls. The real problem is that they are run and designed by people who are not youth and have not been youth for a long time, and so assumptions are made.” (*donor*)

“There is a big need for capacity building in how to develop strong programs. A lot of organizations say they work with girls, but not really in a meaningful way. There are a lot of well-intentioned programs, but they are not designed based on what we know works.” (*researcher*)

“We do not have a lot of youth people, so to speak, and many just add it on to their jobs because they are passionate about it.” (*bilateral*)

“Even several years ago, across the board, people did not know how to do this well. Even providing services for girls we are not good at. But engaging girls? We have really limited expertise, and it’s really hard. We lack deep bench strength.” (*donor*)

“Also, this does get back to the number of players in the adolescent girl space. There are not enough people with technical knowledge.” (*researcher*)

Regional Neglect

A few sources noted regional neglect specifically in Latin America and Francophone Africa; and also a few countries that are “donor darlings.”

Perspectives

“Regionally, I think Latin America has dropped off the agenda. I think there is a lot to learn from Latin America.” (*researcher*)

“Francophone Africa has the worst indicators, and so few programs. We need to rebuild our focus there.” (*multilateral*)

“One of the things that is happening is that there is magnet funding in only a few countries. Funders are focusing on only five countries, so there is some evidence there and more funders are going there. Donors are following the money, going where other donors already have articulated priorities. Those countries are benefitting. But countries and regions with a range of troubling indicators – Francophone Africa and Latin America in particular – are left on the table.” (*researcher*)

“Some countries are the darlings – Ethiopia, Kenya – because money is already going there.” (*researcher*)

Urgency and Opportunity

Finally, these interviews revealed a high sense of urgency to seize a window of opportunity now open for adolescent girls, who are now being prioritized more than ever before. A few, however, conveyed fatigue from a long struggle to get adolescent girls' needs recognized within their institution.

Perspectives

"Girls are kind of a development flavor of the month. Ok, so how can we seize that **now** and make it work for them?" (*researcher*)

"I feel like a scratch record player saying the same thing again and again." (*multilateral*)

"I am defending this work with my nails and teeth for now ..." (*multilateral*)

"The progress made in the last five to six years is pretty phenomenal ... We went from girls not being on the agenda and now they are ... We are hopeful for what we can accomplish, especially if we maximize the window now. We got girls on agenda. Get it done now." (*donor*)



Sectoral themes refer to the specific issues that are relevant to the lives of adolescent girls. Interviews and the literature review revealed consistent perspectives about nine leading themes:

- *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Family Planning*
- *General Health, Maternal Health and HIV*
- *Violence*
- *Secondary Education*
- *Work Transition, Livelihood and Mentoring*
- *Girls as Leaders and Drivers of Change*
- *The Root Causes of Inequality and the Boys and Men in Their Lives*
- *Internally Displaced Girls, Refugee Girls, Conflict and Migration*
- *Other Persistent or Emerging Issues*

Here, too, each of these themes is summarized and elaborated with a sample selection of some of the perspectives gathered during the interviews.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Family Planning

Many sources assert that the scarcity of sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, as well as family planning interventions, represents the biggest missed opportunity and most glaring programmatic and policy gap for adolescent girls. Fear among donors, advocates and government officials, is a commonly cited reason for silence on this issue.

Two sources, however, acknowledge that this gap exists and is detrimental, but counter that they would not want to see sexual and reproductive health used as the primary entry point to serve adolescent girls.

Perspectives

“Young people have the highest unmet family planning need. That creates certain planned poverty. It would be a huge missed opportunity if our advances in family planning do not include adolescent girls. I would hate to see a firewall between that work and the girl work.”
(*donor*)

“I think there is a genuine desire to do things in cohesive way, but there is also genuine resistance to included reproductive health. There is no sexual and reproductive health in our adolescent girl work. We have our head in the sand. But we need to get over it.” (*multilateral*)

“It is sexual and reproductive health. Nothing else comes close.” *(bilateral, in response to inquiry about the biggest programmatic gap for girls)*

“Some of our policy discourse around child marriage does kind of overlook or push under the rug the idea that adolescent girls do have sexual desires and the uncomfortable side of that debate, which is girls’ sexual behavior outside of marriage. Our goals and our interventions have to consider that.” *(researcher)*

“There is a big fear of things being taken out of context – ‘Oh my God, they are handing out condoms to ten-year olds.’ Everyone is scared of that. No one wants to suffer set backs because things are taken out of context.” *(NGO)*

“Married adolescent girls are left out of family planning programs and discussions. Even though they are already married!” *(NGO)*

“We need to stop worrying about a backlash. There has to be a way to do this, to support this kind of work. It’s about how you frame it and make the case. A pregnant 12-year girl cannot go to school. It is as simple as that in some ways. We should stop being scared.” *(advocate)*

“The policy arena around sexual and reproductive health issues is the most controversial and neglected.” *(donor)*

“Family planning is probably the wrong way in ... Too many forces will shut down as soon as you mention of contraception. Too much emphasis on it could derail good work. They shut down if programs are in anyway associated with family planning. It has a bad name, it creates antibodies in countries. Girl work should be in a different paradigm and framework.” *(researcher)*

General Health, Maternal Health and HIV

Health, broadly defined, was mentioned by some sources. In addition, emerging health issues – mental health, nutrition, obesity, tobacco use and non-communicable diseases (*NCD*) – were highlighted as areas of concern.

There is also a growing number of entities that are investigating or prioritizing adolescent girls within the context of maternal mortality, recognizing that there are enormous efforts focused on saving newborn lives and improving maternal health without acknowledging that it is adolescents who are a key population in this work.

In addition, some evidenced-based approaches have led to tobacco awareness projects, suicide-prevention programs, and cancer prevention and treatment programs (particularly for HPV) in some low-income countries and under the stewardship of some of the partners and donors included in this report.

Interestingly, HIV was emphasized as a leading threat to girls by only one source. Other sources

generally mentioned HIV briefly and in relation to other anxieties, including child marriage, trafficking and sexual and reproductive health. This is notable given adolescent girls' disproportionate risk of HIV infection and since it is the leading cause of maternal death in sub-Saharan Africa and the leading cause of death of women of reproductive age globally. At the same time, resources for HIV programs are either leveling or attenuating.

Perspectives

“Adolescent health is not on the agenda at all. It may be as influencers head down the NCD route because so much of current behavior is linked to health outcomes later, like if you start smoking.” (*donor*)

“Several people outside of WHO are trying to get attention to, to get adolescents on other agendas, like the NCD agenda. Making sure there is some measurement piece. There was a sigh of relief on our part. There are going to be adolescent targets on the NCD agenda. The challenge is going to be to make sure it is also sex specific, not just age specific.” (*multilateral*)

“Menstrual hygiene management is an entry point for all of this work that is neglected. It is coming up in our WASH programs. Male engineers are bringing it up! It is one of the last big taboos.” (*multilateral*)

“Adolescent girls have been identified as of particular concern because of HIV and pregnancy prevention. But even then – in terms maternal mortality – data is not age-segregated. We are doing that now – and it might surprise us. So much maternal mortality is happening at youngest and oldest ages.” (*multilateral*)

“I think there is some important messaging that is not happening in terms of statistics and framing. In the US we use the term ‘teen pregnancy.’ But in the global health community, we are not framing it that way. We treat it as if the moment a girl becomes pregnant, she is a woman, no matter what her age is. Marriage or pregnancy obliterates her adolescence. Whether it’s fistula or maternal mortality, I think this is potentially a big policy and messaging issue. Do we want to call out how many of them are girls? If we all did this, it could be a huge win.” (*donor*)

“The first pregnancy is the most risky, no matter her age. Can we stream some of this adolescent health work through maternal and child health. I often say to field staff, ‘Once you evaluate the baby, look up. How old is the mother?’ She’s 16. She’s likely to be pregnant again the next year. How can we delay that pregnancy? We are doing lots of effective, basic maternal and child health without acknowledging that these mothers are often adolescents.” (*NGO*)

“In our community we often remind people that about 800 women die every day around the world from pregnancy and childbirth complications, but we never say how many of them are adolescent girls.” (*donor*)

“Advocacy goes on precious little. So much maternal mortality is happening at youngest and oldest ages.” (*multilateral*)

“Everything is watered down to mothers and babies.” (*advocate*)

Violence

Violence against adolescent girls, and sexual violence in particular, was also a concern for many sources. Self-censorship was a prominent reason for lack of progress in this area.

Perspectives

“What’s not dealt with as much is violence. If there is something missing, that is one of the biggest things. Everyone is much more scared to talk about sex and violence. Sex and violence continues to be the space that is missing.” (*donor*)

“Violence against adolescent girls will affect all progress we make, which is why we want a multisectoral approach.” (*multilateral*)

“But the girls want to talk about it, they are pushing us, it is the media. The community organizations and governments might think it is controversial, but the girls themselves don’t think it is controversial at all.” (*NGO*)

“We do know that the data on violence against women and girls is appalling.” (*NGO*)

Secondary Education

There was general agreement among these sources that education is an intervention that is proven to work, and that the conversation has moved from access to primary school – an area in which much progress has been made – to secondary education. In addition, the discourse is not just about ensuring girls benefit from a secondary education. Work in this area is also focusing on the safety of schools, the quality of instruction, retention and completion, as well as situating health services and gender education within schools.

Perspectives

“With education it is so easy to make the argument – every year of school a girl completes improves her income by this much – but it is one of the few areas for which we can make the case.” (*bilateral*)

“One of the reasons why education is important is because if a girl is in school, you think of her as girl, not a woman, too young to be married. It actually plays into people’s perceptions.” (*advocate*)

“Access used to be the big issue, now it is learning, completion. What’s next? Now the conversation has moved to secondary education and retention. How can we keep girls motivated to stay in school? And what incentives does the family have to allow them to stay in school?” (*advocate*)

Work Transition, Livelihood and Mentoring

A growing concern is how to facilitate the transition for girls from schools to work and their economic empowerment, as reflected in these perspectives.

Mentoring was also an oft mentioned topic, and generally related to education and livelihood concerns. These sources note that many adolescent girls have a dearth of role models within their communities.

Perspectives

“For all the focus on education and literacy, I don’t think many people are thinking about the long-term economic viability for young women.” (*donor*)

“And this keeps coming up. What happens after secondary school? It’s a huge fear. There are no jobs, no career training. Girls about to graduate end up back on the streets to work because there’s no good infrastructure that allows for opportunities after they graduate. Girls are fearful. What’s next?” (*advocate*)

“What’s the game plan, exactly? Because a girl with an education but no food or home is going to take risks that will threaten her health. We need to figure this out. Because we are concerned about this group and the risks they are exposed to if they lack economically valuable skills that they can use. So how do we build their economic viability and skills?” (*donor*)

“Take time to mentor a girl! This keeps coming up. Mentoring with other women to get them through school. They don’t have role models or support. No one to look up to. To be able to have a motivator, a woman, that they can correspond a couple of times a year would be great. It seems like such a simple way to improve things. Our partners should implement mentorship programs.” (*advocate*)

“For young women and female youth to be part of a network of mentoring and peer-to-peer interaction is really critical. And that’s important for whether it is in the more marginalized populations – victims of trafficking to have an outlet and social support to girls in urban slums. That ability to share experiences, feel the support and get that mentoring, personal and professional mentoring. But we don’t have the evidence yet to support this intervention.” (*bilateral*)

“What kind of evidence do we have about job training, shadowing, mentoring? Spending some time learning the institutional culture and the social and institutional knowledge and behavior that is required, that she may not get from her low-income household. How about coaching that goes beyond the basics?” (*researcher*)

“Girls are socialized to have low expectation, but in groups they learn to aspire.” (*researcher*)

Girls as Leaders and Drivers of Change

Another consistent theme is the imperative to put girls’ needs, as they articulate them, and girls’ voices at the heart of everything pursued. Sources note the importance of engaging girls in the advocacy,

research and program design processes.

Perspectives

“They can be a crucial piece ... create change, be involved in the process, not just beneficiaries of it. We are engaging these girls to improve their own lives.” (*advocate*)

“There is such great potential. The girls can be so passionate about things and eager when they learn about their communities and world around them, learn that they can affect their own change, realize the level of agency they can acquire. They can be drivers. Girls have an opportunity to be powerful.” (*NGO*)

“We are doing things for girls instead of involving them.” (*NGO*)

“It is critical to work **with** girls, to develop leadership in girls. How do we develop them to become leaders today, to become leaders tomorrow, with effective communications and empowerment approaches?” (*multilateral*)

The Root Causes of Inequality and the Boys and Men in Their Lives

Several sources noted the importance of addressing the underlying social norms, traditions and practices that have a profound affect on girls’ experiences and expectations. They emphasized the importance of focusing on and engaging boys in order to achieve gender equality. These same sources, however, often noted that it is difficult to fundraise for programs focused on social norms.

Perspectives

“Our focus on girls will end up being a little too ‘flavor of the week’ if we are not looking at structural issues. Girls live in houses with the men and boys who are their fathers and brothers and in communities with men who will be their future partners.” (*researcher*)

“Underlying gender transformation has to be a compliment to everything we do.” (*NGO*)

“Men and boys determine a lot of girls vulnerabilities. We have to reach those who determine a lot of the vulnerabilities.” (*researcher*)

“Girl initiatives tend to focus on a toolkit asset approach. For example, teaching girls what a bank account is, how to read, how to protect her health, build peer networks. But doing those things alone, without transforming gender norms, is unlikely to work.” (*NGO*)

“But, if we only invest in girls education, ten years from now they are going to be married to these guys that we didn’t invest in.” (*researcher*)

“Gender transformative programs are slippery, hard to get at, package, sustain. It’s hard to make into a tool that makes it easy to measure, expand, sustain. Practical gender needs are easier. (*NGO*)

“Because without looking at underlying causes of gender constructs and inequity, our practical programs will not perform as well as we want. A girl may be in school, but if the message she gets at home is that it will lead nowhere, she is just taking a boy’s spot, the parents do not feel like her education is valuable, then our efforts will not yield results.” (NGO)

Internally Displaced Girls, Refugee Girls, Conflict and Migration

There is increasing interest in focusing attention on adolescent girls in humanitarian or post-conflict settings, and in increasing the effectiveness of programs for internally displaced and refugee girls.

Perspectives

“Girls in refugee camps is something that no one is paying attention to.” (donor)

“It might be interesting to look at how much do they consider or take seriously girls and gender and adolescents in refugee and post-conflict situations. I know with post-combatants we often think that we can give them a plow and seeds and all will be ok. I think there are efforts to tend to the survivors of sexual violence and rightly so, but there are huge gaps beyond that, with young women and young men. What services are available? Are we taking into account those needs? Refugee status?” (researcher)

“Refugee camps are a big topic. We’re doing more, but a lot of it isn’t so great. Ok, we set up school, how great are we, but teachers don’t show up ... “ (donor)

Other Persistent or Emerging Issues

Interview participants also argued for the need to direct attention to a range of stubborn or emerging issues that affect adolescent girls, from human rights approaches to climate change, infrastructure, including water and sanitation, agriculture and safety.

Perspectives

“It would be crazy to miss this opportunity to engage girls in climate change. Youth participation is critical. This issue is going to affect them and they have the right to be involved. It’s a perfect fit.” (NGO)

“We found through our research that kids don't feel safe. They are not thinking about their health because they are worried about staying alive. For our program in India we set up health information centers for adolescent girls only and the doctors bought in to this plan because they agree that they are not seeing girls because they don’t feel safe.” (donor)

“The lack of roads and fuel and water, things that dominate girls’ lives, they can't go to school because of these things, doing it is not safe, it’s dangerous, time-consuming. Girls are exposed to great danger collecting fuel and water. There is so much concern about girls safety, but then

we willfully expose them to dangers through requirement to their role.” (*researcher*)

“Demonstrate how water and sanitation investments protect an education investment. It’s a big picture thing.” (*researcher*)



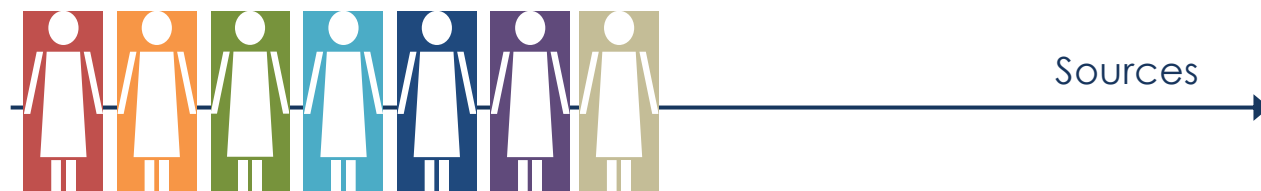
Conclusion

The insights collected and compiled for the landscape analysis, as well as additional research and a comprehensive internal audit of lessons learned from more than 15 years of prioritizing adolescent girls, have deepened the UN Foundation's understanding of the emerging trends and needs of the adolescent girl field, as well as the UN Foundation's current and potential role.

In the near future UN Foundation leadership and the Women and Population team will be evaluating the information collected during this process to inform discussion about its role, strategy and programs. The completed landscape analysis represents the beginning, not the end, of a process that will end with a creative and carefully-developed approach for the UN Foundation's adolescent girl contributions.

Though the learning and planning continues, the UN Foundation is pleased to provide this report now as a courtesy to our valued peers and to keep you abreast of our progress.

The UN Foundation welcomes your thoughts about this report, and looks forward to continuing to engage and collaborate with the admired organizations and individuals with whom we share our high hopes for girls.



The following individuals or representatives from these organizations were interviewed for this report. The United Nations Foundation would like to thank them each for their time and valuable contribution to this process.

- 10x10
- AstraZeneca
- CARE
- Ariana Childs Graham, Coalition for Adolescent Girls
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- UK Department for International Development (DFID)
- European External Policy Advisors
- Feminist Majority Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Girl Hub
- Girls Not Brides
- Girl Scouts of the USA
- ING Foundation
- Instituto Promundo
- International Center for Research on Women
- International Women's Health Coalition
- Johnson & Johnson
- Nike Foundation
- Margaret E. Greene, GreeneWorks
- Miriam Temin, Independent Public Health and Social Policy Advisor
- Plan International
- Population Council
- Public Health Institute and the Adolescent Girl Advocacy Leadership Initiative
- Save the Children
- Summit Foundation
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- UN Women
- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
- U.S. Department of State
- Women Moving Millions
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- World Bank
- World Health Organization