

DELIVERING WITH AND FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

# Five Game-Changing Priorities



## Acknowledgements

This report highlights the opinions of nearly 590,000 young people who participated in a global survey on adolescent girls' rights and policy priorities, either through the Global U-Report platform or across 38 U-Report regional and national programmes. We thank all of these young people for their time and insights, which made this analysis possible.

We are also deeply grateful to the [UNICEF Global Girl Leaders Advisory Group](#), who have been instrumental in shaping the survey and guiding the overall adolescent girls agenda in UNICEF.

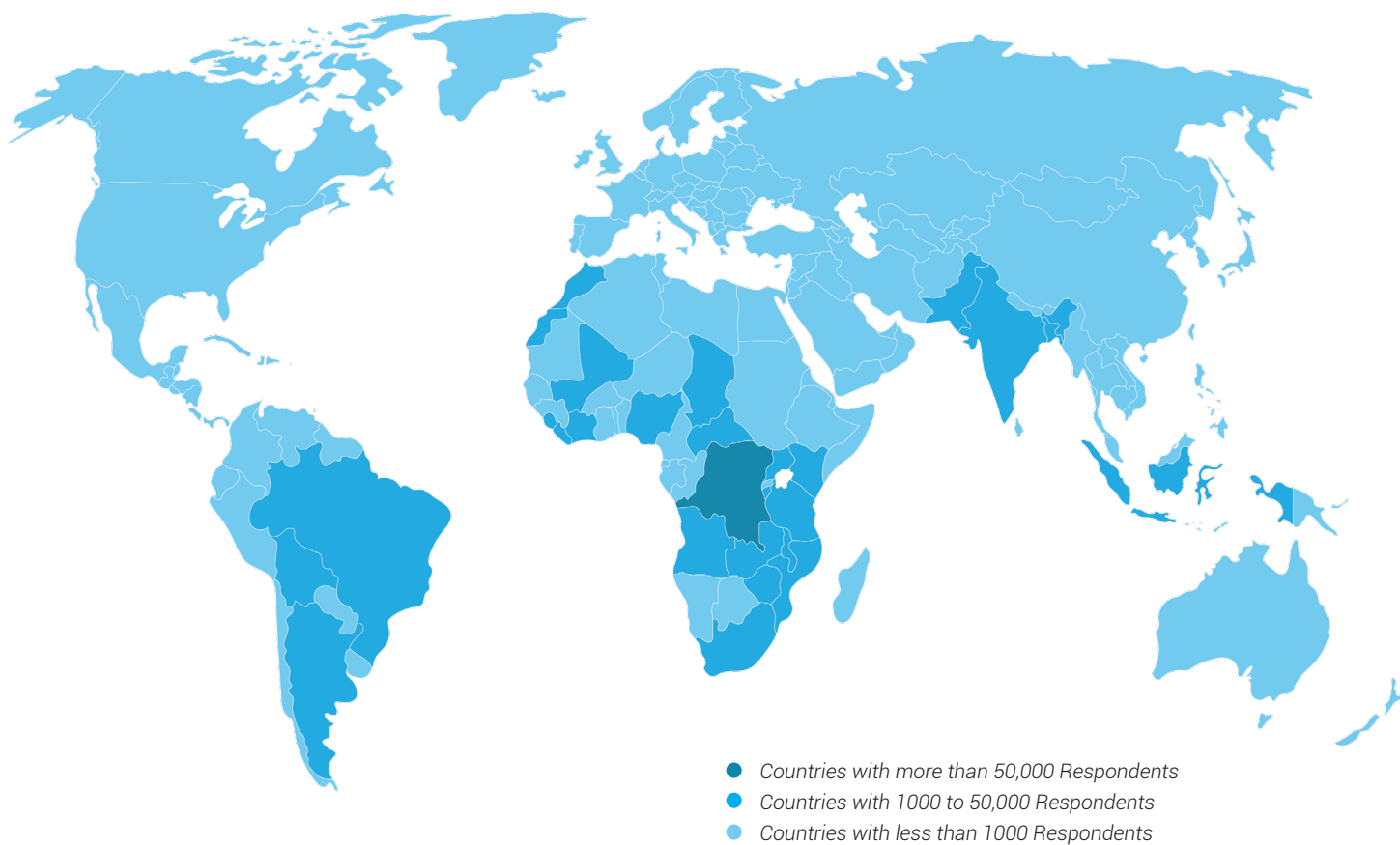
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## Introduction

Equipped with the right resources and opportunities, the world's more than 600 million adolescent girls and young women (aged 10-24) can become the largest generation of empowered leaders, scientists, teachers, health workers, entrepreneurs, artists, diplomats, innovators, and change-makers the world has ever seen. Their potential is limitless. Yet we know girls face significant challenges, sometimes at every turn, on their path to realize this potential.

An estimated 640 million girls and women alive today were married as children.<sup>1</sup> Adolescent girls account for three quarters of all new HIV infections.<sup>2</sup> Despite gains made in education, across the globe adolescent girls are twice as likely as adolescent boys to not be in education, employment or training (NEET).<sup>3</sup> The HPV vaccine, one of the highest impact vaccines available and key to achieving the 2030 global target for the elimination of cervical cancer, is still out of reach for a staggering 85 per cent of girls.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the many barriers that girls face, and the inadequate resources for policies and programmes that target them, girls believe in a better future.<sup>5</sup> Not only are girls optimistic, but they are actively leading the way in a range of activities from community-based action to address child marriage and female genital mutilation, to global advocacy on climate change, debt relief and foreign policy. Girls are ready for change and ready to make change happen. They are experts on their own lives and priorities. Yet they are rarely asked what these priorities are.

Together with UNICEF's Global Girl Leaders Advisory Group, UNICEF rolled out a global U-Report poll reaching nearly 590,000 adolescent girls, boys, young women, and young men.<sup>6</sup> The poll was rolled out through 39 U-Report platforms around the world. The poll asked young people to vote for their policy priorities on gender inequality and advancing girls' rights.<sup>7</sup>

1 UNICEF, Is an End to Child Marriage within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects, 2023, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/is-an-end-to-child-marriage-within-reach/>

2 UNAIDS 2022 estimates

3 UNICEF, Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy, 2022, p. 6, [https://www.unicef.org/media/146091/file/Adolescent\\_Girls\\_Programme\\_Strategy\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/146091/file/Adolescent_Girls_Programme_Strategy_EN.pdf)

4 UNICEF, 'Closing the Gap: UNICEF Bolsters Country Efforts to increase HPV Vaccination', 2023, web article, <https://www.unicef.org/supply/stories/closing-gap-unicef-bolsters-country-efforts-increase-hpv-vaccination>

5 Internal MICS analysis, October 2023.

6 Note: U-Report is UNICEF's digital community for young people, empowering them to find out about issues that affect them, to take action and lead change.

7 Note: The U-Report poll primarily sought to amplify the voices of young people around the world, giving them an opportunity to give their opinions on the issues that affect them, so the data is not meant to be representative of young people globally, nor in any particular country or region. The poll findings are contextualized in relation to and to complement more statistically robust data and the latest research on girls' rights.

The Adolescent Girls' Rights poll covered key areas for girls' rights, including voice and agency, education, bodily autonomy, economic empowerment, and priorities for investment. The poll was co-created with [UNICEF's Global Girl Leaders Advisory Group](#) – a group of adolescent girls and young women from around the world, working with UNICEF to advance girl-led policy and programming.



### UNICEF's Global Girl Leaders Advisory Group member Alliyah Logan about the U-Report poll



*"Accounting for girls and valuing their opinions is crucial when addressing the significant challenge that gender inequality presents in their lives. I appreciated that the poll invited all demographics, including young boys, to share their thoughts on adolescent girls' rights, so that they can be a part of the solution. I am hopeful that the findings from the poll will be a catalyst for increased efforts to alleviate the impacts of gender inequality."*

Alliyah Logan, GGLAG Member (USA)

As a result of the poll, we have heard the strong voices of over half a million adolescents and young people from around the world, speaking out about their policy priorities to challenge gender inequality and advance girls' rights. Based on this wide consultation, UNICEF's programmatic experience and the latest research, this policy brief summarizes five concrete policy priorities for adolescent girls. In addition to voting directly on the policy priorities, participants in the poll could also share their views on priorities to invest US\$1 billion of new resources to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights.

### The five concrete policy priorities that emerged directly from this consultation are as follows:

- **School access & skills, including education on girls' rights and gender equality.**
- **Comprehensive sexuality education and girl-centered adolescent health services.**
- **Classes for parents & caregivers on girls' rights.**
- **Financial literacy training to manage resources & livelihoods.**
- **Financial security with support to earn money & money for the family.**

This brief concludes with a list of five key evidence-based programme solutions aligned with these priorities. UNICEF and its partners will accelerate action on these priorities, with and for adolescent girls.

# Girls' & Young Women's Experience of Gender Discrimination' & 'Being Heard'

More than 90 per cent of the world's females live in countries with 'low' or 'middle' levels of women's empowerment and gender parity.<sup>8</sup> This was reflected in the U-Report global poll. Most respondents (56%) agreed that girls are discriminated against in their countries. However, a higher percentage of girls and women (59%) agreed with the statement compared to boys and men (53%), indicating a 'recognition gap' between those directly affected and those not directly affected.

Figure 1 - Question: Girls are discriminated against in my country. Disaggregated by gender (n=488,451)

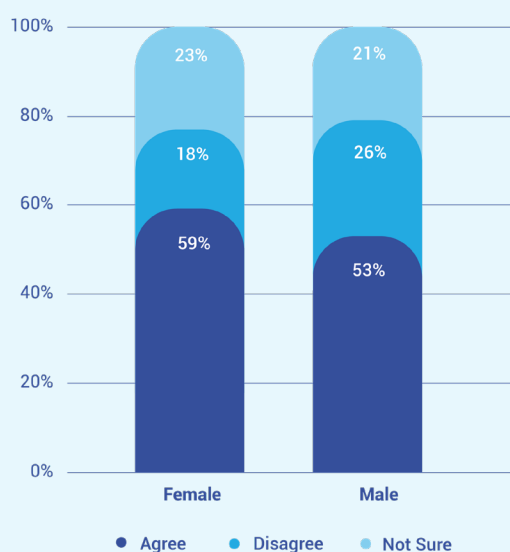
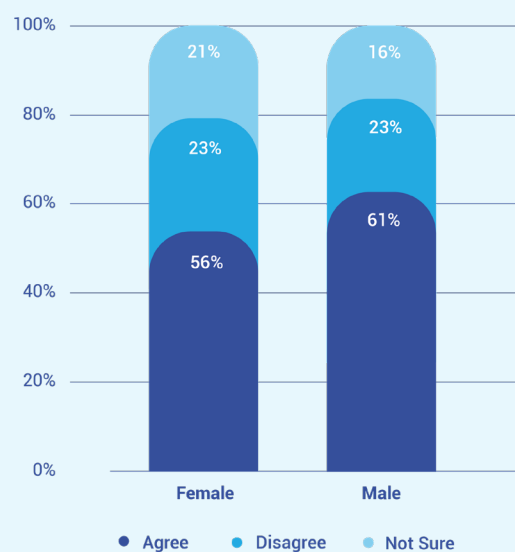


Figure 2 - Do girls believe that if they see something wrong, they can report it to an authority and be believed? Disaggregated by gender (n=448,917)



Furthermore, when asked the question "Do girls believe that if they see something wrong, they can report it to an authority and be believed?", a lower percentage of female respondents (56%) agreed, compared to male respondents (61%). In some regions, this metric for girls' voice and agency was much lower. Less than 50% of respondents from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as Latin America and Caribbean agreed that girls can report something wrong to an authority and be believed.

Overwhelmingly, research shows that the majority of women and men hold gender biases.<sup>9</sup> Discriminatory attitudes and biases are not necessarily improving over time; boys' and men's attitudes follow a curved pattern, in which the oldest men and adolescent boys have more restrictive views of women's rights than middle-aged men.<sup>10</sup> These conditions exacerbate risks of gender-based violence (GBV); and they negatively influence girls' choices and agency in education and employment, alongside negatively influencing the decisions made by people around them. They also negatively impact on girls' and young women's ability to thrive when they move into leadership positions, including in communities, business, and politics. **Ultimately, these gender biases inhibit girls' social and economic empowerment throughout their life course.**

8 UN Women, The Paths to Equal, Twin Indices on women's empowerment and gender equality, 2023, p. 14.

9 UNDP, Breaking Down Gender Biases, Shifting social norms towards gender equality, 2023.

10 Equimundo, The International Men and Gender Equality Survey: A status report on men, women, and gender equality in 15 headlines. Washington, DC, 2022, p. 6.



Kaffrine, Senegal. Franco-Arab school Diamaguene center. December 2021  
© UNICEF/UN0713598/Tremeau

## 01. School access & skills, including education on girls' rights and gender equality

“ *I would work to promote gender education to reduce discrimination and violence against girls. In the long term, I would also try to change the laws and culture that oppress them, to ensure that everyone has a free and dignified life.* ”

**U-Reporter, Girl, 17, Bolivia**

Education access and quality is a priority for young people. 129 million girls are out of school. Only 49 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. Parity is even worse in secondary school, as 42 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in lower secondary education, but just 24 per cent have achieved parity in upper secondary education.<sup>11</sup> Special attention must be paid to girls living in crisis-affected contexts: 54 per cent of girls who are not in formal education worldwide are living in crisis-affected countries.<sup>12</sup> Even within schools, gender-based violence (GBV) is high.<sup>13</sup>

**In this context, almost half of the U-Report poll respondents, 42 per cent of girls and 46 per cent of boys, chose 'access to school' as their top priority for girls' education and skills; the second most selected priority was job-related skills by 21 per cent of girls and 20 per cent of boys; the third most selected priority was 'ending GBV' by 19 per cent of girls and 17 per cent of boys.**

Data on the benefits of girls' access to education are clear – when girls are educated, their lifetime earnings dramatically increase. Adolescent girls with secondary education may expect to earn almost twice as much

as their peers without education.<sup>14</sup> Every dollar spent on girls' schooling brings a triple yield to the girl and her community and each additional year of education improves her health, well-being and quality of life.<sup>15</sup>

Some studies estimate that universal secondary education in low and middle income countries (LMICs) could boost annual gross national income by US\$8.1 trillion for young adults aged 15-24 years, reduce the annual number of child marriages by 2 million, and reduce the number of women aged 15-49 who experience

any form of violence by a partner by 81.3 million.<sup>16</sup> In addition to school access, an important policy priority is the building of market-relevant skills, that will allow girls to transition from school into decent work in the labour force.<sup>17</sup> However, gender gaps in participation of skills building programmes persist. For example, in lower and lower-middle income countries, the female participation rate in vocational education and training is far less than male participation, further limiting girls' options in terms of occupations and earning potential.<sup>18</sup>

### **Policy actions and investments that help increase girls' access to education and skills building and address school-based gender-based violence include:**

- Investments in adolescent girls' access to schools and learning opportunities, including to access the skills they need to transition to employment.
- Social protection measures, such as cash transfer 'plus' programmes and social security benefits that help address economic barriers to learning.
- Revision of policies and laws that prohibit pregnant girls and adolescent mothers from accessing education, paired with policies to support re-entry, including childcare support.
- Investments in public transport for girls to reach schools safely and affordably.
- Implementing school-based violence education programmes using a 'whole-of-school' approach involving all school stakeholders (leadership, educators, parents and caretakers, students, etc.) to prevent and address violence; creating girl-centred reporting and referral services for survivors of GBV; enforcing accountability mechanisms and supporting prevention programming in schools.
- Advancing mental health programmes through schools and other learning pathways.

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11 UNICEF Website, Girls' Education, <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

12 UN Women, Progress on Sustainable Development Goals, Gender Snapshot, 2022, p. 9, [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf)

13 UNICEF, Global Programmatic Framework & Benchmarking Tool: From Call to Action to Programme Responses, 2021, p. 2, <https://www.unicef.org/safetolearncoalition/media/331/file/STL-Global-Programmatic-Framework.pdf>

14 Global Partnership for Education, '5 Reasons Why Girls Education Is a Smart Investment', 2018, (blog) <http://tinyurl.com/4uhuzav9>

15 Population Council, The Radical Power of Education, 2023, [https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/hubs\\_geje/1/](https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/hubs_geje/1/)

16 Ibid.

17 UNICEF, Unpacking School-to-Work Transition: Data and Evidence Synthesis, 2020, p. 49, [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Unpacking-School-to-Work-Transition-Scoping-Paper\\_2019.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Unpacking-School-to-Work-Transition-Scoping-Paper_2019.pdf)

18 UNICEF, Unpacking School-to-Work Transition: Data and Evidence Synthesis, 2020, p. 47





Stevania (left), age 16, Maria (center), age 16, and Theresia (right), age 16, students in Indonesia, show their UNICEF Oky App, described in the box below  
 © UNICEF/UN0799146/Al Asad

## 02. Comprehensive sexuality education & girl-centered adolescent health services

“ *I would allocate funds to improve access to healthcare services for girls, including reproductive health services, vaccinations, and nutrition programs. Ensuring that girls have access to healthcare is essential for their overall well-being and development.* ”

**U-Reporter, Girl, 15, Madagascar**

Adolescent girls face a complex web of challenges in achieving optimal health and exercising their right to bodily autonomy. Beyond the immediate constraints of limited access to knowledge, adolescent girls contend with cultural norms and economic disparities that influence their choices, navigating health services and legal landscapes that are not designed with the full spectrum of girls' needs in mind.

This can result in major gaps in service access and knowledge. For example, girls' menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) needs are seldom met, which affects their school attendance. Government leadership on

MHH policies and programmes is essential for reaching adolescent girls at scale, but programmes are often siloed and small in scale.

**The U-Report poll clearly reflected these gaps in service access and knowledge, as girls and boys across all age groups chose 'education on the body' as a top priority for empowering girls to make decisions about their bodies.<sup>19</sup> Almost half of young people chose education on the body (42% of girls and 43% of boys), a third (32% of girls and 33% of boys) chose educating parents about girls' rights, and the third most voted policy priority was health care (17% of girls and 15% of boys).**



## Evidence-based interventions that can save girls' lives, and promote their health and well-being, include:

- Investments in adolescent girl-focused health services, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and HIV testing, treatment and care.
- Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) linked to sexual reproductive and health rights services, using evidence-based curricula.<sup>20</sup>
- National policies and programs that support access to menstrual health and hygiene services as well as information about adolescent health for girls and boys.
- Acceleration of routine HPV immunization for multi-age cohorts of girls aged 9-14 years, linked to related services such as HIV testing, counselling and care; violence screening, amongst others.
- Providing iron folate and multiple micronutrient supplementation for adolescent girls to address malnutrition, prioritizing pregnant adolescent girls at risk of anaemia.



**UNICEF implements targeted interventions created for girls, with girls that support their access to health services and education.** An example is Oky – the first girl-centred menstruation app that aims to reduce stigma and provide education on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and rights in girl-friendly language. Oky was co-created with girls and for girls, and is a certified digital public good, which has already been adapted in over 13 countries for local roll-out – it has reached more than 650,000 online users.<sup>21</sup> In-app surveys indicate that 96 per cent of respondents reported better understanding of SRH and menstrual health (MH) after using Oky.

The SMS Biz programme is another example of a UNICEF-supported initiative. Partnering with five ministries in Mozambique, the programme is part of the national agenda on sexual health and reproductive rights. The programme has reached 434,648 girls and young women aged 10-24, representing over half (52%) of the total subscribers. The programme is hosted on UNICEF's U-Report platform, which connects over 30 million U-Reporters across 99 countries worldwide and was also used to reach young people with the survey on policy priorities for girls' rights.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> 'Education on the body' refers to comprehensive sexuality education as a policy priority, but this term was chosen as more accessible and commonly understood language for the roll-out of the global survey, particularly for younger adolescents.

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UN Women, World Health Organization, 'International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach', 2018, <https://www.childrenandaids.org/node/701>

<sup>21</sup> Oky App, internal data.

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF Mozambique Country Office, internal data, 2024.



Olivia, 16-years old, Burkina Faso, with her proud mother Estelle.  
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## 03. Classes for parents & caregivers on girls' rights

“ I would invest in training to teenagers and parents on the importance of gender equality. ”

U-Reporter, Girl, 17, Indonesia

Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for adolescent girls. Exposure to violence in the family can have intergenerational impacts, but equally, positive parenting can help to prevent violence and outcomes for gender equality.

The U-Report poll showed that young people felt strongly that educating parents on the rights of girls was important. More than a third of girls and boys across all age groups participating in the poll stated this as their top priority (32% of girls and 33% of boys). It is likely that this figure includes adolescent parents themselves. Education or classes for parents and others on girls'

rights was also commonly referenced in the open text box option as an important strategy for empowering girls, enabling them to make decisions about their own lives, and as strategies in response to violence.

Evidence indicates that well-designed parent and caregiver support programmes can contribute to a range of outcomes for children and parents, including reducing the likelihood of violence. For example, a recent systematic review of 19 programmes that targeted parents and violence prevention showed that parenting programmes were successful at reducing both violence against children and violence against women.<sup>23</sup>

### > Furaha Teens' Parenting Programme in Tanzania

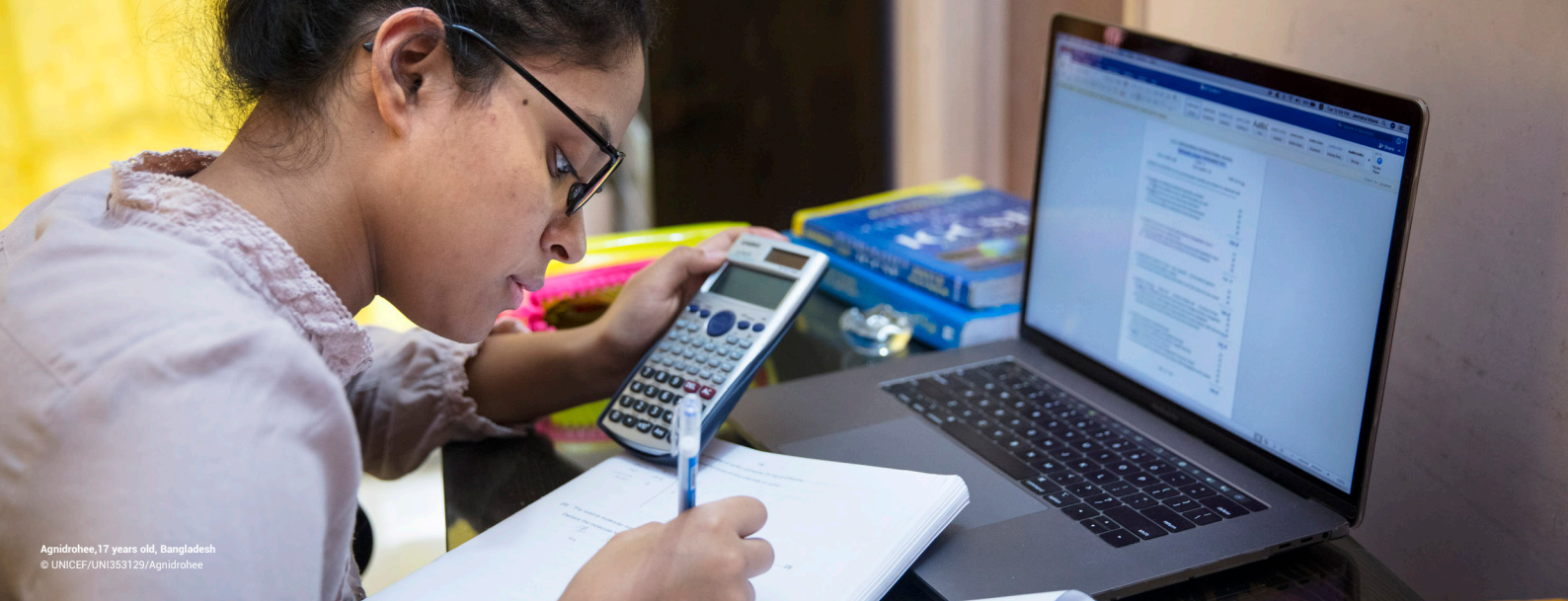
POWER4Girls is a multi-country global programme dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of adolescent girls, and advancing tangible, multisectoral action with and for adolescent girls. In Tanzania this includes a programme with three main components focused on child marriage, economic empowerment and parenting. The parenting component, called 'Furaha Teens', included 82 radio programmes with key messages aligned with the national parenting agenda. All shows included input from adolescents, parents and primary caregivers. Positive initial outcomes show more equal participation of girls and boys in household chores, reduced violence in the home, and improved communication between parents/caregivers and adolescents within a household. The programme motivated parents and primary caregivers to adopt practices such as talking to their adolescent children about SRH, reporting child abuse, and accompanying their pregnant daughters to medical visits.

Greater investments are needed to ensure quality, evidence-based programmes at scale.<sup>24</sup> Evidence shows that parenting and caregiver programmes can lead to different types of positive outcomes for both the parents/caregivers and children participating in these programmes.<sup>25</sup>

23 UNICEF, Brief 1 – Parenting Programmes to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children. Why it is important, 2024, p. 7, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Brief%201%20Parenting%20programmes%20to%20reduce%20violence%20Why%20it%20is%20important.pdf>

24 UNICEF, Brief 2 – Parenting Programmes to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children. What gender transformative programmes look like, 2024, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1915-brief-2-parenting-programmes-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-children-what-gender-transformative-programmes-look-like.html>

25 UNICEF, Brief 3 – Parenting Programmes to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children. How to adapt programmes to address both types of violence, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1917-brief-3-parenting-programmes-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-children-how-to-adapt-programmes-to-address-both-types.html>



Agnidrohee, 17 years old, Bangladesh  
© UNICEF/UNI353129/Agnidrohee

## 04. Financial literacy training to manage resources & livelihoods

“ I would invest in financial literacy to reduce [girls'] financial dependence.

U-Reporter, Girl, 18, India

**Girl respondents across all age groups and all regions chose 'learn how to make good money choices' as the top priority for the question on finances (33%). Girls consistently expressed a desire for financial literacy training and access to financial resources.**

Globally, girls and young women are less likely to be educated on financial literacy than their male peers, and less likely to access formal financial services such as bank accounts.<sup>26</sup> Nearly one billion women around the world are unserved or underserved by the formal financial sector.<sup>27</sup> These factors impact girls' economic

empowerment as they transition to the world of work and adulthood.<sup>28</sup> Besides lacking access to financial literacy training, girls suffer from other dimensions of financial exclusion, including through gender-discriminatory legal and cultural practices. In 41 countries daughters cannot inherit the same way as their brothers, prohibiting girls from accruing wealth from inheritance.<sup>29</sup> Over their life course, the lack of access to capital, financial literacy and formal and informal gender discrimination impacts girls' ability to access banking services for their personal or entrepreneurial/commercial activities, to build wealth and achieve economic security.

### Policy and programme interventions that can increase girls' financial security and inclusion:

- Financial literacy training and access to age-appropriate and girl-centred financial services that allow girls and young women to practise skills of saving money, budgeting, investing and managing finances.<sup>30</sup>
- Ensuring regulatory and legal reforms in national legislation to remove gender discrimination and improve accessibility to assets and services, including the enforcement of these reforms and a complementary track to address discriminatory gender norms and practices related to economic assets.

26 Women's World Banking, Global Findex 2021, 2021, <https://www.womensworldbanking.org/insights/global-findex-2021-womens-world-banking-response/>

27 Women's World Banking Website, <https://www.womensworldbanking.org>

28 Rink, U., Y. Walle and S. Klasen, 'The financial literacy gender gap and the role of culture', *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, Vol. 80, 2021, pp. 117-134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2021.02.006>

29 UN Women, Women's Rights and the Law: A Report Card, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Multimedia/2021/infographic-womens-rights-and-the-law.pdf>

30 Central Bank of Egypt, Gender Savings Groups. Formalising Village Savings Groups With a Gender Lens – Egypt Case Study, 2021, <https://www.cbe.org.eg/-/media/project/cbe/page-content/rich-text/financial-inclusion/reports/gender-saving-groups-formalizing-village-savings-groups.pdf>





Adolescent girl participants of the UNISAT+ Programme in Kazakhstan  
© UNICEF/UN0699626/Ruslan

## 05. Financial security with support to earn money & money for the family

“ [I would] help parents who do not have enough means to enable children in education and to fight against violence.

U-Reporter, Girl, 17, Haiti.

”

The U-Report poll showed segmented findings by age for girls' prioritization of policy priorities on financial security. A higher percentage of younger adolescents aged 14 or younger voted for money for the family as a priority (27%), compared to older adolescents (17%), who voted for earning money as their top priority (27.5%). In more technical language, younger girls were more likely to prioritize cash transfer/social protection programmes for their families and caregivers, while older girls were more likely to prioritise support to increase their own ability to earn money (for example through skills building and employment support programmes).

In all regions of the world, adolescent girls aged 15-19 are more likely than their male peers not to be in education, employment or training.<sup>31</sup> Research shows that girls and young women take longer than men to find jobs, and they have a significantly higher risk of never transitioning to employment over their life cycle compared to their male counterparts.<sup>32</sup> Young women are also entering a labour market that routinely underpays them – globally, women are paid less than men, earning on average 77 cents per every dollar of men's wages.<sup>33</sup> Girls also continue to be left behind in both access to and use of

digital technologies with deeply concerning impacts on their economic empowerment in the long-term: over 90 per cent of jobs worldwide have a digital component to them, while in low-income countries 90 per cent of adolescent girls and young women are offline.<sup>34 35 36</sup> As the world becomes increasingly digitized, gender gaps in the labour market may widen if they are not addressed with urgency now.

Another major structural barrier to the financial security and participation of young women in the labour market is unpaid care and housework responsibilities.<sup>37</sup> Globally, girls aged 5-14 spend 160 million more hours every day on unpaid care and domestic work than boys.<sup>38</sup> Gendered distribution of unpaid care work has consequences for adolescent girls' educational attainment and economic empowerment.

Having children significantly increases time spent on unpaid care responsibilities: unless adolescent mothers are urgently supported with access to quality, affordable childcare, their prospects of economic empowerment will be limited.<sup>39</sup> When families and caregivers lack access to social protection measures and family-friendly policies

such as adequate wages, child benefits and affordable childcare options, families may face hard choices that are filtered through the lens of gender inequality - for example withdrawing girls first from school due to costs, or considering child marriage to help a family make financial ends meet.<sup>40</sup> Financial security is a girls' rights and gender equality issue – and so is the ability to earn a living and to have access to adequate social protection.

Evidence supports both components of this policy priority on financial security. For adolescent girls, this includes evidence that social protection programmes targeted at adult parents have benefits for the whole family, including increased access to education and health services for girls, reductions in intimate partner violence, and delayed sexual debut and childbearing.<sup>41</sup>

Cash transfers may support a reduction in child marriage by reducing poverty pressures and keeping girls in school.<sup>42</sup> Social protection programmes can also have intentional adolescent girl focused components, such as multisectoral 'plus' services focused on livelihoods, mentoring, SRHR counselling and services or nutrition (for example the TASAF programme in Tanzania)<sup>43</sup> – and can also target girls directly, for example through childcare provision for adolescent parents (Hey Baby Programme in South Africa)<sup>44</sup> or public works programmes that support adolescent girls' transition to jobs (MUVA in Mozambique).<sup>45</sup> Research also indicates that well-designed skills building programmes can directly support a transition to work and to earning money as well as being cost-effective.<sup>46</sup>

### **In summary, policy actions and evidence-based investments to achieve girls' financial security include:**

- The use of girl-centred, multisectoral approaches with “cash plus” programming for families to maximize the benefits of social protection measures for girls. This includes programmes with an intentional component on adolescent girls or as a direct target group. Possible interventions include ‘top up’ cash transfers and messaging targeted to keep girls in schools, or ‘plus’ components targeting adolescents as described above.
- The provision of care facilities for adolescent mothers. Access to affordable, quality childcare reduces their unpaid care responsibilities, and builds towards inclusive care systems.
- Investments in at-scale girl-centred skills building programmes, particularly those that feature a combination of foundational, transferrable, job-specific and digital skills.

31 UNICEF, Building Back Equal With and For Adolescent Girls: A Programme Strategy for UNICEF 2022-2025, 2022, p. 6, [https://www.unicef.org/media/128586/file/UNICEF\\_Adolescent\\_Girls\\_Programme\\_Strategy\\_2022.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/128586/file/UNICEF_Adolescent_Girls_Programme_Strategy_2022.pdf)

32 UNICEF, Unpacking School-to-Work Transition: Data and evidence synthesis, 2023, p. ix

33 UNICEF, Women Work, UNICEF's Approach to Women's Paid and Unpaid Work, 2020, p. 2, <https://www.unicef.org/media/66136/file/Women>

34 UNICEF, What We Know About the Gender Digital Divide for Girls: A Literature Review, 2021, p. 3, <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/8311/file/What%20we%20know%20about%20the%20gender%20digital%20divide%20for%20girls%20A%20literature%20review.pdf>

35 UNICEF, Bridging the Gender Digital Divide, 2023, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/>

36 Ibid, p. 7.

37 UNICEF, Gender Norms and Unpaid Work, 2023, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-norms-and-unpaid-work/>

38 Ibid.

39 Child Care Dev., 'Associations of formal childcare use with health and human capital development for adolescent mothers and their children in South Africa: A cross-sectional study', 2024, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37287209/>

40 UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, website <https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage>

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## > UNICEF's Skills4Girls Programme



Adolescent girls participating in Game Changers Coalition "Game Jam" hackathon in Siem Reap  
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UNICEF's Skills4Girls programme is a girl-centered initiative promoting skills building for girls and young women to boost their earning potential, tackle discriminatory gender norms, and enable a transition to work. Skills4Girls has reached over 6 million girls in 20+ countries, providing them with context-specific programmes with a diverse set of approaches reaching in and out of school girls. These include innovative approaches such as the Game Changers Coalition training content which uses game development as a vehicle to engage girls and teaches industry-specific skills including coding, design and animation, alongside transferrable skills such as teamwork, time management and storytelling. Programmes like this give girls an opportunity to envision themselves in the high-growth STEAM field like game development, and prepares them with skills for the wider technology industry.

## *How I would spend a billion dollars for girls?*

**An analysis of young people's aspirations for leaders**

**Qualitative analysis of nearly 43,000 respondents who responded to the question "If you were a government leader with 1 billion dollars to spend on girls' rights, how would you spend it?" point to strong themes for young people's priorities on investments for girls' rights, including:**



**Education and schools for girls**, including quality, free education; support for learning costs (such as school fees, uniforms and other costs); and building and improving school infrastructure for girls as well as raising awareness about girls' right to education.



**Action on gender equality**, including promoting equal opportunities for girls and boys; civic and rights education; promotion and awareness of girls' and women's rights, including protecting reproductive rights; educating parents on girls' rights.



**Skills and training for girls**, including vocational and entrepreneurial skills, life skills, digital skills as well as leadership and communication skills.



**Combatting child marriage**, by promoting girls' safety, empowering girls, protecting them, and supporting survivors of violence.



**Girls' health**, including sexual and reproductive health education; general health education; awareness of health rights; and provision of health services.





Aidana, Kazakhstan programme participant of the UNISAT+ looking at the nanosatellite launch  
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## In Conclusion: 5 Concrete Solutions with & for Adolescent Girls

“ *[If I was] a government leader with 1 billion dollars for girls' rights, I would (1) allocate a significant portion to improve and expand educational opportunities for girls, (2) invest in health care programs addressing girls specific needs, (3) [undertake] legal advocacy, (4) invest in technology driven solutions to bridge the educational and economic gaps and also foster innovation and inclusion for girls in digital age.* ”

**U-Reporter, Girl, 18, Rwanda**

The five policy priorities presented in this document are informed by nearly 590,000 young voices from around the world. They made their voices heard loud and clear on advancing adolescent girls' rights, well-being and leadership, with five salient, evidence-based and strategic policy priorities that can be acted on today. It is incumbent on all policymakers, decision-makers and formal power holders to listen to their voices and translate these priority requests into action.

With six years left to realize the commitments made to adolescent girls in the Sustainable Development Goals, urgent investment is needed to make progress to realise their rights, across health, nutrition, education, protection, economic empowerment and gender inequality. These five game changing priorities provide a roadmap for much-needed acceleration towards these goals.

# UNICEF's Five Concrete Programmatic Solutions

Based on the U-Report consultation, the latest research and data, UNICEF's programmatic experience and comparative advantage, UNICEF and partners will accelerate action on five concrete programmatic solutions, with and for adolescent girls:

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01.



**Accelerating action to provide girl-centred adolescent health services and knowledge to every adolescent girl, including in humanitarian contexts - with a particular focus on cervical cancer, HIV, maternal health care and access to reliable, age-appropriate information.** UNICEF will rapidly scale up work together with partners to roll out 'HPV plus' vaccination to enable lifelong protection of girls from cervical cancer linked to CSE and other health interventions; scale up our comprehensive work on HIV prevention, treatment care and support, including SRHR; scale up work to reach pregnant adolescent girls with quality, respectful maternal newborn health care; and increase access to reliable, age-appropriate information about adolescent girls' bodies and health. Through these initiatives, together with partners UNICEF will aim to reach 98.5 million adolescent girls by 2025.

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02.



**Scale-up of programmes for the prevention of anaemia and malnutrition in adolescent girls as a critical part of our comprehensive health and nutrition approach, including in humanitarian contexts.** This requires a package of essential nutrition interventions, including education and counselling to equip girls and adults around them with more information and knowledge, micronutrient supplementation with iron and folic acid or multiple micronutrients, and other contextually relevant interventions. To address the high prevalence of anaemia and other forms of malnutrition among adolescent girls, together with partners, by 2025 UNICEF will reach at least 100 million adolescent girls through gender-responsive programmes for the prevention of anaemia and all forms of malnutrition.

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03.



**A laser focus on scaling up learning and skills development for all girls, including support for the transition to work and at scale programmes to promote girls' voice, agency and leadership, including in humanitarian contexts.** These programme approaches will include multi-pronged skills programmes, including economic and financial skills, life skills, and educational content on gender equality in schools to combat harmful gender stereotypes and promote schools as inclusive, safe spaces, free from violence. It also includes the roll-out of more partnerships with girl-focused and girl-led networks, organisations and groups. We aim to reach at least 26 million more adolescent girls and young women with this work by 2025, with a special focus on the 97 million out-of-school girls.

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04.



**A major effort to embed gender-transformative approaches in parenting training and roll this out to more parents, as part of a growing body of work on the prevention of GBV, including in emergencies.**

UNICEF will scale up evidence-based parenting programmes that are: shown to reduce the occurrence of violence, including violence perpetrated against children and women; improve communication and relationships among parents and their children; and linked to a more equal redistribution of unpaid care responsibilities. The content and quality of these programmes is key. UNICEF will complement and leverage existing approaches of working with communities and families to end GBV and harmful practices, including in emergencies. At least 2 million parents and adolescent girls will receive support to tackle different forms of GBV by 2025 with UNICEF's support, together with our partners.

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05.



**On financial security and the economic empowerment of girls, UNICEF will invest together with partners in the scale-up of girl-centred cash, care and empowerment programmes.**

We will invest in two priority prongs of action, based on the available evidence and consultation with adolescent girls: (1) address the financial security and resilience of families, as a critical strategy to enable parents and caregivers to support girls' rights at scale. This will be done through the scale-up of cash transfer programmes, linked with girl-centred services and training - a major strategy for UNICEF's work on gender equality across a range of outcomes, including to eradicate child marriage, given that poverty is a key driver of child marriage, particularly in the poorest households. UNICEF will work on the introduction or scale-up of 'plus' components for older adolescent girls with a focus on economic empowerment, including livelihoods skills and financial literacy programmes; (2) together with partners, UNICEF will continue to drive momentum on child marriage, with targeted action for adolescent girls to receive prevention and care interventions to address child marriage. Working together across a range of partnerships in the public sector, private sector and UN system, we will reach at least 138 million adolescent girls by 2025 with our combined efforts to scale up cash, care and empowerment programmes, including in humanitarian contexts.



**DELIVERING WITH AND FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS**  
**Five Game-Changing Priorities**