

# THE GIRL Declaration

I was **not** PUT on THIS EARTH to be **Invisible**

**I** was **NOT** born to be **DENIED**

I was not given **LIFE** only to belong to someone else.

I belong to **ME**

I HAVE A **VOICE** & I WILL USE IT.

I have **dreams** unforgettable

I have a **name** and it is not **ANONYMOUS**  
OR **INSIGNIFICANT** OR **UNWORTHY**  
OR **WAITING ANY MORE TO BE CALLED.**

Some day, they will say: this was the Moment  
when the World **WOKE UP** to **my potential**

**THIS IS THE MOMENT I WAS ALLOWED  
TO BE ASTONISHING**

**THIS IS THE MOMENT WHEN MY RISING  
NO LONGER SCARES YOU**

this is the **MOMENT** when being a **girl**

became my **STRENGTH** my **SANCTUARY** **NOT MY PAIN**

**THIS IS THE MOMENT WHEN THE WORLD  
SEES THAT I AM HELD BACK BY EVERY  
PROBLEM AND I AM KEY TO ALL SOLUTIONS**

this is the **MOMENT** when a **girl** and a **GIRL** and a **girl** and  
250 million other girls say with voices loud that **THIS IS OUR MOMENT**

**this is my MOMENT.**

**THIS, YES THIS IS THE MOMENT**



Artwork by girls, for girls

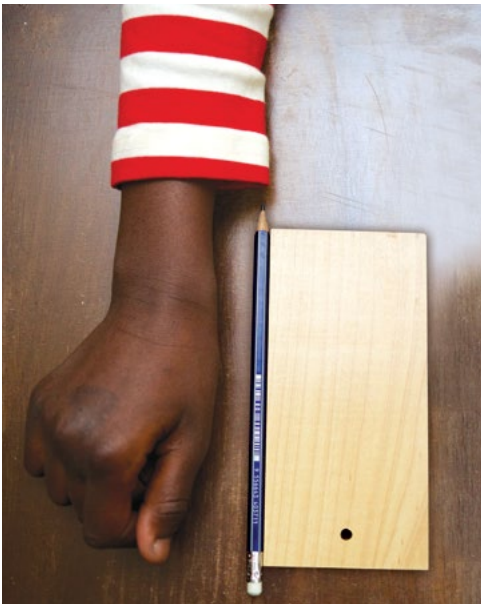
# A call to **ACTION** FOR THE **POST-2015** **DEVELOPMENT** *agenda:* **IT'S TIME TO** **STOP POVERTY** **BEFORE IT STARTS**

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Five hundred and eight adolescent girls living in poverty in 14 countries across four continents were asked what they need to have a chance to reach their potential.

More than 25 of the world's leading organizations, using their vast years of experience working with girls and the best evidence available, developed this Declaration with girls, for girls and for the world.

Now is the moment. Real things need to change for girls and for the world. Adolescent girls are not part of just one issue, they are key to every sustainable solution.





# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## 1. **Plan with me, design for me**

Use insights directly from girls to sharpen the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and services.

Build relationships and social networks with girls so their voices are heard in key institutions.

## 2. **Make me visible, make me count**

Collect, disaggregate and analyze data in all sectors by age and sex and use it to improve programs, influence policy and track progress. Data helps drive smarter, more strategic and targeted investments. At a minimum, analyze data by sex and five-year age segments (10-14, 15-19) to ensure that no girl is left behind. No data revolution will be complete without this.

## 3. **Give me a fair share of the money you spend to fix things because we girls give more back**

Allocate dedicated and targeted funding for adolescent girls across program and policy budgets.

At a minimum, make budget allocations commensurate with adolescent girls' needs and potential to drive positive change.

## 4. **Think of me now, because now is when I need you most; and now is when it will make the most difference**

Intentionally focus on adolescence (ages 10-19) and invest early, before girls undergo the physical, emotional and social changes associated with puberty.

Design policies and programs to ensure adolescence is a healthy and safe transition to adulthood, not a period in which girls are left out.

## 5. **Don't forget me because I'm too poor, too distant, too silenced for you to know I am here**

In the quest for scale, it's easy to overlook the most marginalized – including adolescent girls in emergency, conflict and post-conflict settings even though reaching them can help end the cycle of conflict. Plan for the most marginalized from the beginning to ensure they aren't left out at the end.

## 6. **Don't hold me back**

Tackle discriminatory social norms that govern adolescent girls' daily lives and have significant and enduring consequences. Mobilize communities, families, men and boys to support adolescent girls.

## 7. **Laws should be fair; make and enforce ones that respect and protect me**

Pass laws and ensure accountability to legal policies and frameworks that protect the rights of girls and give them access to justice. At a minimum, governments must meet international obligations and hold those who violate rights of adolescent girls accountable.



# RECOMMENDED GOALS

*I want to learn, be smart and capable; I need an education for that. My schooling needs to be good — it must be free, or else I struggle to attend, and it must be safe and nearby, or else I will stop going.*

## Goal 1: Education

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

### Targets:

- I. Ensure all girls globally transition to and complete free, quality secondary school, prioritizing the most marginalized (e.g. rural, poor, married and at risk of marriage, disabled, conflict-affected).
- II. Ensure all girls achieve recognized and measurable learning standards.
- III. Eliminate violence, sexual exploitation and harassment at schools.



*I am my own person and I want to know about my body and how to take care of it — not be ashamed or afraid or worry that when I have children I'll be in danger or unwell.*

## Goal 2: Health

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

### Targets:

- I. Reduce the number of girls who become pregnant before age 18 by 50% by 2030. Nearly 13 million adolescent girls give birth each year in developing countries.
- II. Provide, monitor and evaluate universal access to youth-friendly health information and services,<sup>1</sup> including comprehensive life skills-based sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health, for all girls – in and out of school, regardless of marital or pregnancy status.
- III. End harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, for all girls.

<sup>1</sup> Free from coercion, stigma, discrimination and violence





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*Why are girls raped? I want to make it so that all girls are safe and so that it's not a regular thing when a girl is hit by someone, anyone, or is touched or cornered or taken away.*

### **Goal 3: Safety**

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

### **Targets:**

- I. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against girls.
- II. Ensure all girls have access to a "girl-friendly space."
- III. Ensure all states have national and sub-national mechanisms to identify, refer and report sexual violence against adolescent girls.
- IV. Stop trafficking and exploitation of girls by passing and enforcing laws and policies that hold perpetrators – not victims accountable.

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*I want to be in control of my future and provide for myself and my family, but I need the opportunities and the know-how first.*

### **Goal 4: Economic Security**

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

#### **Targets:**

- I. Increase girls' savings and access to financial services by 50% by 2030.
- II. Ensure all girls receive quality financial literacy training.
- III. Reform laws so girls can open a bank account and have equal rights to secure land tenure.

*It's like people look through me because I am a girl. I have a voice but are you listening? Do you even know I exist?*

### **Goal 5: Citizenship**

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

#### **Targets:**

- I. Eliminate child marriage globally by 2030.
- II. Ensure all girls have access to free and universal legal identity, including birth registration, formal identification, citizenship and the right to pass citizenship on to spouses and/or children.
- III. Collect and disaggregate data by age and sex.
- IV. Ensure all girls say their views are listened to, respected and included in decisions about their lives.



# WHY GIRLS?

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## **THE CASE FOR PRIORITIZING GIRLS: STOP POVERTY BEFORE IT STARTS**

### **IT'S A MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS.**

The world too often neglects the human rights of adolescent girls. People take advantage of their lack of power and political voice, their isolation amid restrictive social norms, and their limited access to financial assets and protection under the law. For example, about 14,000,000 girls are married as children each year despite international agreements that condemn the practice.<sup>i</sup> Putting girls at the center of the next generation of global development goals provides a framework for ensuring that girls' human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

### **ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAVE THE POWER TO END INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY.**

Investing in adolescent girls is not only the right moral decision — it's a smart economic decision. What happens to girls during adolescence, a critical period of physical, emotional and social change, shapes their future ability as leaders, earners, providers and mothers. When girls grow up healthy, educated, safe and empowered, they emerge as adults better able to ensure their own success and well-being, and that of others.

## **THE RETURN ON INVESTING IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS IS HIGH, SO ARE THE COSTS OF EXCLUDING THEM.**

Just one additional year of secondary schooling boosts girls' future earning potential by 15-25 percent.<sup>ii</sup> In Kenya, that means national income could jump \$3.4 billion — almost 10% — if all 1.6 million Kenyan girls completed secondary school and the 220,000 adolescent mothers avoided pregnancy.<sup>iii</sup> In India, the stakes are even higher. With nearly 4 million adolescent mothers annually, India loses \$383 billion in potential lifetime income.<sup>iv</sup>

## **INVESTING IN GIRLS HELPS SOLVE GLOBAL CHALLENGES.**

Investing in adolescent girls is critical to a sustainable future for us all. Adolescent girls can accelerate change on issues ranging from climate change to peace and security. These issues play out on a daily basis in adolescent girls' lives, yet we fail to make investments that target the unique needs of specific populations of adolescent girls. Building adolescent girls' capacities accelerates change today and will equip them in the future to make informed decisions about issues such as land resource management, innovative solutions for a green economy and leading more equitable societies.





# THE VOICE OF GIRLS

## THIS IS THE MOMENT FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS. GIRLS LIKE:

- Andressa**, aged 16, Brazil  
**Gloria**, aged 13, Kenya  
**Lantana**, aged 13, Nigeria  
**Dina**, aged 16, Egypt  
**Linda**, aged 11, Liberia  
**Han Yue**, aged 12, China  
**Sulan**, aged 15, Philippines  
**Runanga**, aged 11, Democratic Republic of the Congo  
**Ahsas**, aged 19, Pakistan  
**Laiza**, aged 14, Mexico  
**Beza**, aged 16, Ethiopia  
**Nilam**, aged 17, India  
**Hamida**, aged 10, Indonesia  
**Uwamahoro**, aged 14, Rwanda



We consulted 508 adolescent girls living in poverty in 14 countries around the world about their hopes and dreams, the challenges they face in their lives and the solutions they think are most important.

Here is some of what they had to say.

### ABOUT EDUCATION:

"I want to go to school but I cannot because my family needs me."

Egypt, 16-19

"I want a husband that supports me in continuing my education." Nigeria, 13-15

"I wish I could complete my studies and become someone important in the future so that I can help my fellow girls to prosper in the future."

Kenya, 16-19

"I know that because of my studies today I will play a big role tomorrow."

DRC, 16-19

"I want to finish my education without anyone insulting or humiliating me, and want no one to call me names."

Egypt, 13-15

"During the two years I didn't go to school, I just stayed at home. It made me very unhappy... All I ever really did was chores around the house. Sometimes I needed to escape to the nearby countryside, just to get away – I was really sad." DRC, 13-19

"I watch the children go to school every day and wish I could be one of them. I feel sad that I am not at school." India, 13-15





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

"I feel happy and safe when I'm at school; it protects you from things that happen in the world." China, 13-15

"My parents want me to be educated, but I don't have time to go to school. I have eight siblings to look after."  
Pakistan, 16-19

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

*"I feel happy and safe when I'm at school; it protects you from things that happen in the world."*

"I got married and had children at an early age, so I had to leave school, but I have now re-started my education because I want to be educated. I need to be." Pakistan, 16-19

"I wish to be educated so that I can provide for my family if my husband cannot." Nigeria, 13-15



## ABOUT HEALTH:

"I hate FGM. It has caused many deaths. I even witnessed a girl in our area undergoing FGM, and she really bled... and died, so this is quite detrimental to our girls."  
Kenya, 16-19

"Girls' bodies are not ready for childbirth but we do not all know this, and our communities do not understand." India, 13-15

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

*"Girls' bodies are not ready for childbirth but we do not all know this, and our communities do not understand."*

"I want to get more information about sexuality so that young people think better things in the future about what they can give their family."  
Mexico, 16-19

"I want to be able to eat rice with fish and chicken, not on its own."  
Indonesia, 10-12





**ABOUT SAFETY:**

“Why do girls get raped by men?  
I don’t understand.” Rwanda, 16-19

“I just want to protect my girl from  
anything that might harm her –  
from society,  
any disease or  
anything that might  
cause her pain.”

Egypt, 16-19

“Even if the girl is not at fault, she still  
gets the blame.” India 16-19

“Girls are not allowed to spend too  
much time together – or rumours  
can start.” Ethiopia 13-15

“I hope when I return from my Qur’an  
class I won’t walk alone. I have to be  
with my friends so I won’t  
be kidnapped.” Indonesia, 10-12

“Every day we experience war;  
there is enormous instability. The  
conflict explains why we experience  
so many attacks, and girls are  
raped so frequently.” DRC, 16-19

*“Girls are not allowed to spend too much  
time together – or rumours can start.”*

“Why are girls the only ones who  
get raped?” Ethiopia, 13-15

“My brother says I’m a ‘bad girl’  
for going outside unescorted.”  
Pakistan, 16-19

“Every boy should think of a girl like  
his own sister, then they won’t commit  
crimes against her.” India, 13-15

“I’ve got friends surrounding me  
who can help me.” DRC, 16-19

## ABOUT ECONOMIC SECURITY:

"My wish is that parents should stop sending their children to have sex for money." Liberia, 13-15

"I want to be a police officer so that I can protect the other women who are like me." India, 13-15

"I want to be able to stand on my own two feet (not be dependent). Please let me be home for some years before marrying me off." India, 16-19

"My biggest hope is that people have opportunities to work and that there is no more corruption." Mexico, 13-15

"I would like to work as an engineer in the future. There will be competition from both girls and boys – people will assume that those kind of jobs belong to men, but girls can pursue that kind of work too." DRC, 16-19

*"I would like to be a business lady to change the life of my children and my family."*

"I would like to be a business lady to change the life of my children and my family." Kenya, 16-1

"I want to know how I can get money and I want to be taught how to engage in business." Nigeria, 10-12







## ABOUT THEIR LIVES AND THEIR DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE:

"Listen to what I say. It's important."  
Brazil, 16-19

"Do people know that poor people like us exist?" Rwanda, 13-15

"I do not understand why a girl's life is valued less than a boy's."  
Indonesia, 16-19

"I want to live freely. I don't want people to dictate what I do. No one to control us, no one to hit us, no one to tell us what clothes to wear." Egypt, 13-15

"I wish I were a boy so that I could live freely like boys and not be restricted like girls." Pakistan, 16-19

"I can't imagine a perfect day. I can't imagine anything different to the life I'm living." India, 16-19

"We cannot do anything without being judged – we have to help our communities but they don't treat us like their sisters or wives." India, 13-15

"My mother is the most important person to me... I have no one if I don't have her." China, 16-19

"When a girl starts to get boobs then her parents just think she is ready to be a woman – work and get married."  
Liberia, 10-12

"I haven't played a game in two years." Pakistan, 13-15

"My wish is to see efforts regarding women's progress being accomplished. And I want everyone to realize that women are capable of doing everything." Ethiopia, 16-19

"Girls are seen as the weakest link, they are targeted for old family feuds that have nothing to do with them."  
Pakistan, 13-15

"They shouldn't make the girls stay inside. They should just teach the boys how to behave." India, 13-15

"Why don't boys have to do any of the chores?" Nigeria, 13-15

*"Do people know that poor people like us exist?"*

"My mum has been taking care of me since I was little, and I have to repay what she has done to me, and I have to take care of my parents."  
Indonesia, 10-12

"I want to be an advocate for women so they do not feel inferior." Ethiopia, 16-19



- i "Marrying Too Young; End Child Marriage." UNFPA 2012. <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/Marrying-TooYoung.pdf>
- ii Psacharopoulos, George, and Harry Anthony Patrinos. "Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update". World Bank. Education Economics (2002) 12.2: (111-34). [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281504040>Returns\\_Investment\\_Edu.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281504040>Returns_Investment_Edu.pdf)
- iii Chaaban, Jad and Wendy Cunningham. "Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: the girl effect dividend." World Bank 2011. [http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?entityID=000158349\\_20110808092702&pagePK=64165259](http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?entityID=000158349_20110808092702&pagePK=64165259)
- iv Chaaban, Jad and Wendy Cunningham. "Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: the girl effect dividend." World Bank 2011. [http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?entityID=000158349\\_20110808092702&pagePK=64165259](http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?entityID=000158349_20110808092702&pagePK=64165259)



**THE GIRL EFFECT**

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