



## Global Adolescent Girl Leadership Town Hall Recommendations

There are now 1.2 billion adolescents (aged 10 to 19) worldwide and this number will increase until 2050. Nearly nine out of ten adolescents live in low- and middle-income countries. More than 130 million girls under 18 around the world are not in school, due to gender bias, conflict, cost, early marriage, and economic pressure on them to work.

Girls' voices, experiences, and insights are key to the development of sustainable and effective programs, projects, and institutions, and yet they are often sidelined or excluded altogether. Therefore, it is critical to listen, engage and partner with adolescent girls in a meaningful way to address their needs.

Ahead of the [Global Forum for Adolescents](#) in October 2023, and the Girls Deliver Pre-Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, 41 adolescent girls from diverse backgrounds developed recommendations that spotlight the need for increased and renewed financial, political and programme commitments and accountability towards adolescent girls' well-being. Girls are demanding more. They can no longer stand by the side. The recommendations are anchored in the [five domains of adolescent well-being](#), that focus on the overall well-being of adolescents as opposed to only health. These recommendations will inform the overall programme of the GFA as well as the Agenda for Action for Adolescents, a product of the ['What Young People Want Initiative'](#) – ensuring a clear trajectory of action.

### **A call to all decision makers to prioritize the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls:**

Strategic investment in adolescent girls' education, health, safety, and economic opportunities can help end inter-generational poverty; positively affect the most marginalized and underserved communities; and boost the economies of entire countries. These recommendations serve as an urgent appeal to stakeholders, from member states to philanthropies, to civil society and UN agencies, to foster environments that value and promote agency and resilience among adolescents. Leveraging the inherent strengths and unique perspectives of adolescents, it is hoped these recommendations will act as a catalyst for meaningful change.

Adolescent girls demand:

- A significant increase in commitments and global funding for adolescents and an urgent need accelerate action towards 2030.
- The improvement of environments such as schools, community centers, and homes, that cultivate and celebrate agency and resilience among adolescents, providing platforms for self-expression, decision-making, and voicing concerns that directly affect them, consequently fostering safe developmental spaces. This includes:
  - Support networks and safe spaces for peer connection, shared experiences, and essential support. Such networks significantly contribute to a sense of belonging, resilience reinforcement, and opportunities for learning and personal growth.



- The implementation of specialized programs and institutions that cater to the needs of adolescents living with disabilities, ensuring accessible and inclusive opportunities in education, healthcare, and social events.
- The acknowledgement and appreciation of adolescent efforts, assuring their time and contributions are recognized and valued. They demand the enactment of protective policies and laws that forbid exploitation while respecting their expertise and lived experiences.
- The meaningful inclusion of girls in decision-making and policy formulation processes and recognition of intersectional identities in shaping policies that impact girls' lives, placing their inclusion at the forefront including.
  - The promotion of equal rights for all genders, endorsing efforts that counteract gender-based discrimination and ensure equal opportunities.
  - The eradication of gender discrimination in all academic areas, particularly STEM, to openly accept, train, and perceive girls as valuable contributors in their chosen fields.
  - The provision of equal opportunities such as scholarships, financial aid, and research grants to various gender diverse students to improve their skills and contribute meaningfully to national development.

**Adolescent girls in all their diversity recommend that Member States:**

- Increase the level and effectiveness of domestic spending on adolescent well-being by providing adequate budgetary allocations to education expenditure within ministries of education to address adolescent health, well-being, and period poverty.
- Ensure increased and equitable adolescent engagement in developing policies and programmes that affect them, including comprehensive educational programs about menstruation, comprehensive sexuality education, and equal access to technical, vocational, commercial, and creative skills.
- Encourage dialogues with adolescent leaders, fostering a culture of respect and openness that allows adolescents to express their views and ideas with decision-makers freely.
- Enact policies that ensure free and tax-exempt access to girls' reproductive health products and consistently provide these services, especially in crises.
  - Sanitary pads must be affordable and accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status.
  - Menstruation education must be enhanced for both adolescents and healthcare professionals to reduce stigma.
- Promote healthy school environments, providing access to nutritious meals, physical activity breaks, and implementing wellness programs prioritizing students' health, including nutrition education, teaching girls how to maintain a balanced diet and exercise regimen.
  - Modernize education curricula to meet the evolving needs and realities of adolescent girls in the digital age.
  - Integrate mental health education and resources in school settings, providing access to counselors and therapists.



- Recognize the importance of mental health and ensure comprehensive mental health services and supportive environments that reduce stigma and promote mental wellness.
- Develop policies that combat cyber harassment without resulting in censorship, specifically for girls in online spaces. Policies should include reporting mechanisms that effectively address gender-based violence (GBV) within schools and communities, establishing clear procedures and supportive systems for GBV survivors.
- Create adolescent-friendly spaces in police stations, hospitals, schools, colleges, and universities with trained personnel who can attend to the specific needs of adolescent girls.
  - Advocate for marginalized girls' safety, particularly in settlements, and implement protective measures for GBV survivors, including those affected by police harassment.
  - Improve victim support services' efficiency, emphasizing streamlined processes that prioritize survivor wellbeing and justice access.
  - Establish explicit sanctions for any organization that compromises survivors' wellbeing.
- Ensure better preparedness for crises by developing contingency plans and allocating resources for educational continuity to ensure uninterrupted access to quality education for all adolescents. Establish effective organization and planning to guarantee consistent availability of these products and services, even in times of conflict and pandemics.
- Make education inclusive for students with special needs, neurodivergence, and learning considerations, ensuring job availability that accommodates their unique abilities.

**Adolescent girls in all their diversity recommend that Civil Society Organizations that support adolescent girls:**

- Provide the space, support, and opportunity for adolescent girls to drive their own development agenda by engaging them in creating the policies, programming, and research that affect their lives and communities.
  - Advocate for equal leadership opportunities for girls in schools, making their voices heard in decision-making bodies.
  - Create opportunities for girls to share ideas that can drive transformation—for themselves, and their communities.
  - Strengthen the capacities of adolescent girls to demand their rights and to hold national systems and institutions accountable so that their personal, distinct, and diverse needs are met.
- Promote positive and informed language around mental health, encouraging adolescents to seek support from trusted individuals. This includes prioritizing self-care as a vital method for addressing mental health issues.
- Advocate for innovative sanitary napkin designs, addressing health issues related to unhygienic menstruation practices while benefiting the environment.
- Establish policies that safeguard adolescent-led movements, ensuring their effective participation and protecting their voices and ideas.



- Continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of girl projects and programs to ensure accountability and effectiveness.
- Promote the chalk back method as an advocacy tool to combat street harassment and gender-based violence.
- Ensure accessibility of knowledge on contraception, menstrual health, and consent among adolescents.

#### **Adolescent girls in all their diversity recommend that Philanthropies:**

- Fund girl-led movements in under-served geographies, accompanied by resources and support for national, regional, and global learning, strategizing, and networking.
  - Critically examine their funding allocation, considering who gets overlooked and how intersectionality might influence funding needs.
  - Support training programs and initiatives that offer small grants to adolescents so that they can pursue their passions and leverage their strengths as valuable contributors to their community.
- Fund the development of age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education resources in native languages to ensure extensive adolescent reach.
- Recognize funding and policy gaps in combating online gender-based violence and encourage collaboration to address these gaps.
- Increase investment in teacher and professional training to enhance leadership and safety protocols for girls in both formal and informal educational settings.
- Prioritize the establishment of safety nets, particularly for adolescent girls, to provide social mobility resources and protection.
- Foster partnerships with tech companies to promote digital literacy and access to technology for girls, and actively provide resources that promote the digital divide closure, specifically investing in adolescent-led solutions and innovations.

#### **Adolescent girls in all their diversity recommend that UN Agencies:**

- Create platforms for adolescents to express their concerns, ideas, and solutions in official UN dialogues and conferences.
- Promote, support and fund adolescent-led activities that foster social cohesion, such as environmental initiatives, social justice campaigns, or community development projects.
- Provide resources and opportunities for adolescent leadership development and initiatives that recognize girls as co-leaders, co-creators, and as partners, including comprehensive training and capacity-building programs to help girls develop public speaking and leadership skills.
- Prioritize the health and well-being of adolescents by supporting their education, skill development, employability, and access to high-quality health services.
- Ensure that information and services that are related to adolescents are consistent with their evolving capacities, and free of stigma and discrimination, and should uphold their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Support and promote:
  - Mentorship programmes for adolescent girls, in women and adolescent-led initiatives. Mentorship programmes inspire and create meaningful connections



between adults and adolescents, nurturing their growth, leadership, and empowerment.

- Gender-responsive parenting programmes that nurture agency and resilience in children. Parenting approaches should foster autonomy, responsibility, and self-esteem, contribute to building strong foundations for adolescent agency and resilience.
- Collaborations with Member States and Civil Society to ensure the right to education for all girls, particularly those in crisis or conflict zones.
- Prioritize and encourage a shift in attitudes towards adolescents' leadership in all UN Agencies.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to engage with adolescents in their communities, utilizing their skills, knowledge, and time for the betterment of the different communities.

### **Conclusion**

Member States, Philanthropies, Civil Society and UN agencies must actively integrate recommendations that are based on the lived realities of adolescent girls into their strategies and initiatives designed to uplift adolescents and acknowledge their worth, value, and potential. Adolescents stand as the change agents of the present, shaping the world for a better tomorrow.