Adolescent Girls Resource Pack

A summary of the evidence

Introduction

This report summarises the current evidence and lessons learned on what works for adolescent girls' empowerment. This is a resource for DFID staff working on policy, standalone adolescent girls programming, or to integrate adolescent girls' empowerment into sectoral programming. It builds on global and UK commitments to adolescent girls' empowerment in the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality[10], Economic Development Strategy[11], and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Why adolescent girls?

Defining adolescence

Adolescence is defined as the second decade of life, from age 10-19[12], a period of transformation, and of opportunity and risk. The experience of adolescence can vary significantly by individual and context, within and between countries, with the transition from childhood to adulthood blurred in cases where adolescents do not live with their parents or marry early. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests there is a common developmental 'arc' with shared milestones young people experience during this period.[13]

Whilst adolescence should represent a time of expansion, opportunities for growth and exploration, and expanded social networks, for many adolescent girls, this time represents a shrinking of the space they are able to take up in the world. They face an increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV), an increased burden of unpaid care work, and harmful gender norms increasingly shaping their lives, choices and freedoms.

In considering adolescent girls' empowerment, the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) conceptual framework for adolescent girls' empowerment is a useful tool: it considers the capability outcomes of different groups of adolescent girls, and how these are shaped, as well as different change strategies, and their context dynamics, highlighting the importance of adolescent girls' life stages and enabling environment.

Opportunities and risks

Girls have the right to lives where they can fulfil their potential, live free from violence and with bodily autonomy, but their choices are often constrained by intersecting barriers and oppressions. For example, a study in South Sudan found that whilst adolescent girls held more gender equitable views than adult women, their ability to act on their beliefs was constrained by coming of age in a society with strong patriarchal views.[14]

Investing in adolescent girls' empowerment can yield a triple dividend: impact on her life now, her future life as an adult, and inter-generational impacts on any future children.[15] In countries with a demographic transition leading to a significant 'youth bulge', investing in adolescent girls can contribute to poverty reduction, reducing inequalities, and transforming harmful norms, through e.g. supporting girls' education, economic participation, and freedom from violence. Despite this, it is also important to note the critical response to the so-called 'girl effect', arguing that investment in adolescent girls too often focuses on the economic contributions young people can make rather than focusing on the broader rights, gender and social justice issues that shape their lives.[16,17]

KEY STATISTICS

- **86%** of the world's **1.2 million** adolescents live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- Adolescents make up **1/4** of the world's population and are the largest cohort of young people in history.[1]
- **120 million** (1 in 10) girls under 20 have experienced sexual violence[2].
- **200 million** girls and women in 30 countries have experienced some form of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C);[34]
- Child marriage affects **15 million** girls every year.[5]
- One additional school year can increase a woman's earnings by **10 - 20%**[6]
- Girls aged 10-14 spend **50% more** of their time on household chores than boys[7]
- Approximately **16 million** girls aged 15 - 19 years and **2.5 million** girls under 16 years give birth each year in LMICs.[8]
- In 2017, **79%** of new HIV infections among 10-19 year-olds in Eastern and Southern Africa were among girls.[9]

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical and cognitive development, and of an increased appetite for risk-taking.[18] It is also a time of adolescent girls' changing place in the family and community, as gender norms shift and roles become more rigid, e.g. through restrictions on mobility, and an increased burden of unpaid work and care.[19]

Adolescent girls experience heightened risk of GBV (physical, sexual, economic and emotional), and new forms of violence, such as IPV, sexual exploitation, and increased risk of FGM/C and child/early and forced marriage (C/EFM).[20] Risk factors include early marriage and childbearing,[21] chronic poverty, living in FCAS settings, harmful and restrictive social norms, as well as girls' lack of access to protection and legal services.[22] Harmful consequences include the increased risk of later or concurrent GBV (poly-victimisation), lack of access to education, physical and mental health issues, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions.[23, 24]

Adolescence is a critical period during which to support positive development trajectories.[25] **Yet, despite adolescent girls' specific needs, they often fall between the cracks of programmes targeting children or adult women,** particularly where their social status can make them invisible in needs assessments, which do not proactively seek out hidden populations.[26] For example, violence prevention programmes, unless focused on FGM/C or C/EFM, often overlook adolescent girls' specific experience of GBV.[27] This can also play out in policy: for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not offer a nuanced perspective related to age and gender, which is particularly problematic for adolescent girls.[28] **This is also linked to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning systems**; only 18 SDG indicators explicitly call for disaggregation by gender and adolescent- or youth-specific age categories, meaning that girls' needs can remain invisible to policymakers and programme designers.[29]

The COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying many of these well-known risks and barriers that adolescent girls face. Measures put in place to contain the spread of the pandemic such as quarantine, social distancing and restricting movement are putting girls and women at greater risk of GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse, teenage pregnancy and early, forced marriage. Increasing economic stress on households may lead girls into risky, exploitative situations as part of household coping strategies. Widespread school closures are likely to further exacerbate the gender divide in education as girls may find it harder to return to education when they are able.[30]

Key considerations: the importance of context and intersectionality

It is important to consider adolescent girls in all their diversity when designing and managing programmes. Some groups of girls, including those with disabilities, girls who are mothers, girls from minority groups, refugee and migrant girls, are likely to face violence, and poor health, education and social outcomes. For example, adolescents with disabilities are **2 to 4 times more likely to experience violence** than non-disabled adolescents, with girls being at particular risk of sexual violence.[31] **Girls' lives are shaped by their surroundings**, facing different risks in urban, peri-urban and rural settings, and areas affected by conflict and climate change. Adolescent girls in crises and humanitarian settings are at high risk of sexual violence and more at risk of C/EFM.[32]

Girls are discriminated against and excluded in various ways, as they are subject to multiple and often reinforcing systems of oppression, leading to poor outcomes at the individual and population levels and increased barriers to participation. Where programmes do not take girls' intersecting identities and diverse experiences into account, and how overlapping systems of oppression can compound the discrimination they face, they risk exacerbating existing inequalities. In order to meet the SDG commitments on leaving no one behind, an intersectional analysis is crucial. Good contextual analysis should be based on an understanding of gender and power dynamics, and grounded in the meaningful participation and voices of a diverse group of adolescent girls. Data should be collected and analysed in a disaggregated way to identify any trends in experience according to intersecting identities.

Data and evidence gathered with an intersectional lens are generally lacking, meaning we do not have a full picture of the discriminations and exclusions some girls face. More research which disaggregates data along these lines is needed to adequately address the realities of girls' lives. This includes the intersections between age, gender and other identities such as race, ethnicity, caste, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic and migrant status.

What Works?

1. Multi-component

Multi-component, or 'bundled' programmes have emerged in response to the complex challenges adolescent girls face, where two or more components seek to achieve multiple outcomes in adolescent girls' lives, such as improved SRHR-knowledge, reduced exposure to violence, and economic empowerment. Approaches that address multiple risks and barriers are sometimes called holistic, whole-girl, or ecological approaches. **Evidence suggests that multi-component programmes, whether operating at the individual level and/or in girls' wider ecosystem, perform better than single-component programmes and often produce multiple and reinforcing outcomes.**[33,34] This has been demonstrated by programmes seeking to change behaviours and impact on violence, education, work and marriage outcomes for adolescent girls, rather than those solely focusing on raising awareness and improving knowledge.[35] For example, the **Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme**[36,37] in Uganda combined: trained peer mentors delivering clubs outside of school; financial skills training tailored to different age groups; social empowerment components to build girls' confidence and raise awareness of rights, SRHR and gender issues; and engagement with girls' parents and communities. A Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) evaluation found lasting effects four years post-implementation: girl participants were five times more likely to engage in income-generating activities than girls in the control group; and there were significant reductions in teenage pregnancy, sexual violence, and early marriage.[38]

'The most effective programmes often engage with actors in girls' ecosystem, such as family members and caregivers, community-leaders and others who shape norms and reinforce practices that affect adolescent girls' realities, as

transformational and lasting change is dependent on change at multiple levels in society. A review of interventions to prevent multiple forms of violence[39] against adolescent girls found that **multi-component programmes with elements of community engagement outperformed single-component programmes**, which showed mixed or adverse impact. The most promising programmes were composed of two components and included activities to build girls' social networks, support role models outside the family, and skills-development for girls, and include community engagement.[40]

Despite the growing body of evidence that points toward the benefits of multi-component programmes,[41,42] **more research is needed to understand the relative importance of different components**, and what combination of interventions deliver the best outcomes.[43, 44] However, some evidence is emerging: for example, the **Adolescent Girls Initiative-Kenya (AGI-K)** delivered four different packages of interventions to over 6000 girls; three packages consisted of different combinations of multi-component, multi-level, interventions while one consisted of a single community-level intervention.[45] An RCT study found that the combination of education, health and wealth creating interventions achieved a wider range of outcomes and were more cost-effective than the single-component intervention. For example, the education intervention, which included a cash transfer to the household conditional on girls' enrolment and regular school

Figure 1 Key Messages

- Put in place clear **safeguarding mechanisms**, ensure access to GBV services, and activities must be safe and convenient for girls
- **Understand and challenge harmful social norms** and power imbalances, to support an enabling environment for girls' empowerment
- Use **safe spaces** where girls can meet regularly with peers and locally recruited trained female mentors, to deliver multi-component interventions
- Design holistic, **multi-component programmes** that also engage with girls' environments (families, communities, boys)
- Collect and analyse **disaggregated data** to identify trends in experience according to intersecting identities
- Collect robust **contextual analysis** based on an understanding of gender and power

See the DFID La Pepiniere Girl Led Research in Kinshasa

See the Washington Group questions as adapted for youth

See the ELA Programme in Uganda

See the Adolescent Girls Initiative-Kenya Programme

See the Voices for Change Programme in Nigeria

See DFID's safeguarding standards

attendance, had more benefits for girls when they were simultaneously active in a girl's empowerment club.[46] **Combining conditional cash transfers with empowerment components (sometimes called 'cash plus') is emerging as a promising approach**, supported by evidence from multi-country evaluations which have found that this combination can improve girls' school attendance, delay marriage and increase safer sexual experiences.[47] An RCT also found that girls' groups (safe spaces) which focused on health and social outcomes was an effective platform for delivering the wealth generation intervention, which consisted of financial education coupled with practicing the acquired skills. **The findings suggest that education interventions alongside wealth and health interventions delivered through a safe-space approach provides a cost-effective package which can yield a wide range of outcomes for girls**.[48]

Providing safe spaces where adolescent girls can regularly meet with mentors and peers is a common and effective approach in adolescent girls-centred programming which can be used as a platform to deliver a range of multi-component interventions. Evidence suggest that girls-only spaces provide an enabling environment for girls to participate, share experiences and form social networks with other girls and mentors, making these spaces effective for building self-esteem and confidence; two essential aspects of girls' social and psycho-social empowerment. [49] To learn more about safe spaces approaches, see the accompanying Brief on Girls' Groups.

2. Addressing social norms

Transforming restrictive and harmful social norms is crucial for expanding adolescent girls' capabilities and achieving lasting change.[50] During adolescence, gender norms become more strictly enforced and more 'personally salient'; early adolescence in particular (10-14) appears to be a particularly 'sensitive period' during which gender norms shift and adolescent girls see their worlds shrink, as the freedoms of childhood are restricted through newly enforced harmful gender norms.[51,52]

Empowering adolescent girls involves understanding and challenging harmful social norms or promoting new norms. The most effective interventions to address social norms and attitudes work at different levels – with adolescent girls, their male and female parents and caregivers, with men and boys, and with actors with power to influence others in the community such as teachers, traditional community and religious leaders. Media campaigns can add value when they are paired with face-to-face discussion groups.[53] For example, the **DFID Voices for Change (V4C) programm**e in Nigeria delivered an integrated approach to change social norms around GBV, women's leadership, and decision-making power. This was done through combining social marketing through a youth-focused brand platform (*Purple*), with in-person and virtual safe spaces with young women and young men; community-level work to create a critical mass to support new norms; and advocacy to change discriminatory laws.[54]

Other integrated interventions[55] have also shown promising outcomes on transforming harmful social norms. For example, the Population Council **Berhane Hewan programme** in Ethiopia combined group-based, mentor-led life skills and livelihoods training and community-wide conversations around early marriage; a quasi-experimental evaluation has shown strong impact for younger adolescent girls (10-14), who were 90% less likely to marry early, and 1.8 times more likely to have used family planning, compared to adolescent girls in villages without the intervention.[55] Lessons can also be learned from *SASA!*, a highly
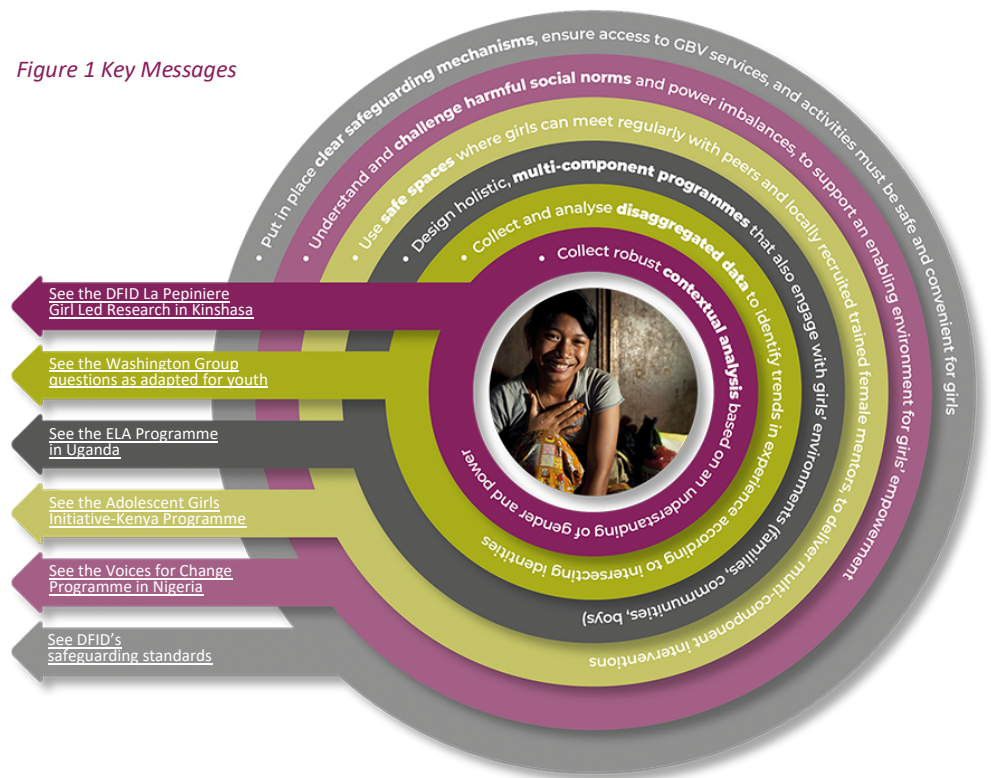
effective community mobilisation programme to shift social norms around gender-based violence which has been adapted to focus on girls in Haiti.[56] A review of 13 social norm change interventions focused on adolescent girls' reproductive health found that scaling-up community-based normative change interventions is possible, but requires preparation from the outset when working at multiple levels and within complex environments.[57]

Risk for backlash when social norms and gender roles are challenged:

The process of social norm change is not linear, and there can be risks of backlash to people who deviate from social norms or are early adopters of new social norms before society reaches a 'tipping point' and the new norm becomes acceptable. All gender transformative and women and girls empowerment programming, such as girls education programmes, aim to challenge the status quo of gender inequality and unequal access to women and girls rights. Some level of backlash is therefore inevitable, no matter how rigorous risk mitigation measures. Response services for adolescent girls who disclose experiencing GBV must therefore be a priority in all adolescent girls' empowerment programming.

These risks and services should be addressed in the programme's safeguarding strategy, to mitigate risks of violence against adolescent girls (and their family and community members) and provide adequate health and psychosocial support services to adolescent girl survivors of violence; e.g. a quasi-experimental study in Uganda showed that girls who have access to economic assets may be at higher risk of sexual violence.[58]

3. Key principles in adolescent girl's programmes

Participation of adolescent girls throughout the programme cycle is crucial to ensure that the programme is responsive to the needs and priorities of girls.[60] The DFID DRC **La Pepiniere programme** co-developed with adolescent girls *Girl Participation Principles[61]* to guide the programme, and engaged girl researchers from diverse backgrounds to undertake participatory girl-led research in line with these principles. For further guidance, see DFID's **Smart Guide on Beneficiary Engagement**.

SAFEGUARDING:

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We know that adolescence is a time of heightened risks to GBV, with new forms of violence perpetrated towards girls when they reach puberty and existing forms of violence often exacerbated during this time.[59] It is critical that all programmes working with adolescent girls recognise and safeguard against these risks through adequate policies and procedures to prevent violence and abuse perpetrated by partners, staff, volunteers and others involved in implementing the programme, including vetting of all staff and volunteers that will work directly with adolescent girls. Programmes working closely with adolescent girls, particularly through mentoring or girls' clubs where relationships and trust are built, should expect to receive reports of violence and abuse happening in homes and communities and be prepared to appropriately respond. Programmes should pay particular attention to context and identity; for example, girls in fragile and conflict-affected states and humanitarian settings, as well as girls with disabilities, are at even greater risk. **For further guidance, contact the DFID Safeguarding Unit.**

Engaging families and communities are important steps towards creating an enabling and supportive environment for adolescent girls.[62] It can also increase acceptance of the programme and the chances that girls will participate in activities.[63] There is also increasing acknowledgement of the importance of engaging men and boys, e.g. through girls' groups interventions running additional activities with boys to decrease backlash and accelerate norm change[64] (see accompanying Girls' Groups Brief). For example, the Population Council **Nisikilize Tujengane (NISITU) Programme in Kenya** delivers parallel single-sex safe spaces sessions (as well as monthly mixed sessions) with adolescent girls and boys covering SRH and life skills, gender norms and power relations, and financial education; results will be available in 2020.[65]

Inclusion of diverse and marginalised girls is essential to live up to the principles of leaving no one behind and doing no harm. To do so, programme staff and volunteers require an understanding of the complex and intersecting identities and experiences of adolescent girls, and that they are equipped to challenge and transform, rather than reinforce, discriminatory norms based on race, ethnicity, disability, or sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and classist attitudes and behaviours. Ensuring participation of marginalised girls also requires proactive efforts to engage diverse girls, including direct and meaningful consultation with girls to identify and remove barriers. Population Council have outlined practical steps for how to 'recruit' girls to programmes, via female enumerators going house-to-house in the community where the programme will be implemented, aiming to identify *all* eligible girls.[66] This allows them to identify girls who may be largely restricted to their home such as adolescent domestic workers and girls with disabilities. During the community walk, they also map potential security risks in order to choose a location for programme activities that is convenient and safe for girls to access, including those with disabilities. Practical considerations include holding activities at times when it is convenient and safe for girls to travel,[67] offering childcare, and providing stipends to cover costs associated with participating (e.g. taking time out of productive activities).[68]

Establishing linkages to quality, survivor centred GBV response services and referral mechanisms are important safeguarding requirements. These be physical spaces for face-to-face interaction or telephone hotlines or through other online service provision, in either case programmes will need to assess routinely whether these services meet minimum standards and invest in multicomponent programming (inclusive of GBV response) when operating in contexts without a viable, safe and accessible GBV response system. For longer term girls' empowerment programming, it is critical to invest in strengthening community and government systems and services in contexts where these are weak, hard to access or unsafe, to ensure a sufficient level of capacity to handle referrals and provide adolescent-friendly response services.[69]

Locally recruited, female mentors who receive thorough training, including how to lead critical reflection on power imbalances and discriminatory norms[70,] and ongoing support are best placed to guide and support adolescent girls through the programmes as they are more likely to be familiar with the everyday realities adolescent girls face, and can play a crucial role in

challenging harmful norms in communities. Locally recruited mentors can also be available to provide face-to-face, or remote support as necessary, to girls outside meeting hours (in the case of safe spaces), if necessary.[71, 72] However, mentors should not be utilised as a replacement for adequate support for girls from GBV response services as overburdening young women mentors with responsibility for response to GBV disclosed by girls may increase risks both for girls and their mentors.

Supporting girls' leadership skills is a common component of many girls' empowerment programmes, which deserves more attention because of its potential to enhance girls' participation and collective action.[73, 74] Adolescent girls commonly face gender-based and age-based barriers to participate in decision-making and take action on issues that affect them and matter to them. Evidence suggest that girl-centred programmes are effective in enhancing girls' leadership skills, with effects on girls' civic and political engagements.[75]

Interventions should be age-appropriate and adapted to the segment of girls it is targeting. Age-appropriate interventions are crucial in adolescent girls programming, as the lived reality of a 10-year-old girl can be vastly different to that of a 19-year old. Girls' lived experiences are also shaped by factors such as marital status, motherhood and school enrolment. Lessons learned from Populations Council's extensive programming with adolescent girls suggest that interventions utilising group-based approaches are most effective when girls with similar characteristics and life situations are grouped together.[76] However, it is crucial that these approaches remain inclusive and accessible, for instance for girls with disabilities.

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SATURATION AND DELIVERING AT SCALE:

Empowering adolescent girls can generate powerful change on an individual level which has an intrinsic value in itself. Empowering girls in numbers can be even more powerful; the Population Council utilises an approach that aims to identify all girls (within the targeted segment) in the community where a programme in being implemented.[77] Reaching a large proportion of eligible girls is believed to increase the changes of transforming social norms in the surrounding context, and enhance girls' voice and rights within the community. However, there is little evidence on the optimal saturation in adolescent girls programming; an evidence review found that 9 out of 10 programmes had positive outcomes in girls' lives regardless of saturation.[78]

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Length of programmes and frequency of activities also has an impact on outcomes for girls. Programmes need to consider the delivery approach as carefully as programme content. Multi-component programmes tend to entail more time with participants, which may be a contributing factor to their effectiveness.[79] Longer and more intensive programme cycles are preferred, although little is known about the optimal length and intensity of programmes.[80] However, more intense programmes must consider the time burden of this on adolescent girls, since many girls engage in unpaid work, including care and domestic work in their family. The size of group and location for meetings will need to be carefully considered, especially in contexts where social distancing measures are in place.

Consider the potential of safely utilising digital technology such as mobile phones, in girls' empowerment programmes. Research in Nepal found that access to mobile phones opened up new ways of communicating amongst adolescent girls with empowering outcomes. Other studies in diverse settings have found that radio, and increasingly social media, can be used to disseminate information and increase knowledge of various issues that matter to girls.[81] Given girls' relatively limited and controlled access to digital technologies in some contexts[82] and the risks posed by online abuse and exploitation of adolescent girls, programmes should carefully consider how to mitigate risks and teach digital literacy to ensure girls are empowered and safe online. This is all the more critical when social gatherings and face-to-face interactions are limited. Access to technology, ensuring privacy and informed consent and managing risk are essential to consider before deciding on the use of digital or mobile technology.

Lastly, flexible and responsive programming is crucial, especially when working in contexts where girls may face additional barriers to participate, such as in times of conflict and crisis, and the risk of attrition is higher. When delivering a safe spaces programme to girls in humanitarian contexts in DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Liberia and Lebanon, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) developed a shortened curriculum for emergency contexts as it was challenging to deliver a lengthy curriculum in conflict-affected areas.[83] For guidance on adolescent girls programming in conflict and other crisis, see Humanitarian and Conflict Brief.

4. Evidence gaps and recommendations for research to fill gaps

There are significant evidence gaps on the situation of marginalised adolescent girls, including girls with disabilities, girls who are married, girls from ethnic minorities, girls with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and those affected by conflict and humanitarian crises.[84, 85] There is also limited evidence of what works for adolescent girl mothers, who are among the most marginalised, facing stigma, discrimination, and exclusion from key services, including education.[86] There is also relatively little known about girls living in urban areas. GAGE is making strides in expanding this evidence base and how programmes can ensure that marginalised girls are not excluded.[87]

Despite widespread recognition of the need for age-appropriate interventions, there is limited evidence of what this looks like. Many programmes target adolescent girls broadly (10-19 years) and many evaluations and do not differentiate outcomes for younger and older adolescent girls.[88, 89,90]

As programmes grow more complex and target multiple issues as they seek to empower girls, evaluations and research also need to examine a wider range of outcomes. For instance, most research and evaluations of programmes that aim to reduce and prevent GBV against adolescent girls focus on single-violence outcomes, despite growing evidence of poly-victimisation whereby girls are subject to multiple forms of violence, by different perpetrators, and in multiple settings.[91] More rigorous research and evaluations should aim to capture a fuller range of outcomes and nuance the understanding of *which girls* are benefiting from programmes through collecting and analysing disaggregated data.

The urgent need to invest in adolescent girls and tackle the challenges they face, coupled with emerging evidence of how well-designed, multi-component programmes can contribute to change in girls' lives, make it imperative to **explore how successful programmes can be scaled up to reach more girls and be rolled out in different contexts**. Few studies to date have discussed how to scale these programmes. Similarly, there is limited evidence of what works to adapt programmes to new contexts. Lastly, **sustainability of programmes needs to be further explored**; little is known about the long-term impact of adolescent girls' empowerment programmes, and what could be done during and after implementation to enhance the probability for changes that last. [92] **To learn more about measuring adolescent girls' empowerment, see the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Brief.**

EXAMPLES OF ENTRY POINTS FOR EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN SECTORAL PROGRAMMES

EDUCATION

Education is important in mediating adolescent girls' access to social networks, agency, and wellbeing.[93] Evidence from school-based interventions show the potential to reduce different forms of IPV[94] and transform attitudes and behaviours that promote gender equality.[95]

- **Providing safe informal, community-based education** can boost girls' enrolment due to flexibility of approach and proximity to girls' homes.[96]
- **Extra-curricular activities**, including remedial classes, girls' clubs and providing access to role models are low-cost and can improve girls' learning outcomes, aspirations and soft skills, and promote awareness and action on gender inequality issues, including GBV.[97]
- **Promote school safety and ensure schools are girl-friendly** through shifting harmful attitudes, creating child-centred policies and a school ethos based on inclusion and equity, gender-sensitive curricula, training for teachers on gender equality, adequate vetting of teachers, adequate codes of conduct in place, holding perpetrators to account, coordinating with child protection services,[98] and involving women and girls in school governance.[99,100]
- **Strategies to include girls with disabilities, including through inclusive pedagogy, are important.** Recent data from the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) has highlighted that between 3 and 5% girls in mainstream schools have a disability and that they are likely to achieve lower scores on standardised literacy and numeracy tests.[101]
- **Providing comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) that includes a focus on gender equality, norms and attitudes, can contribute to adolescent girls and boys developing more healthy, respectful and equal relationships, and sexual and reproductive health and behaviours. To be effective, it is crucial that CSA is age-appropriate, evidence-based and delivered well.[102]
- **Promote school safety and ensure schools are girl-friendly and inclusive** through shifting harmful attitudes, creating child-centred policies and a school ethos based on inclusion and equity, gender-sensitive curricula, training for teachers on gender norms, holding perpetrators to account and coordinating with child protection services.[103]
- **Alternative education** such as accelerated education programmes, catch-up programmes and community-based education to reach girls who for various reasons struggle to re-enter formal school.[104] Lessons learned from GEC's work with out-of-school girls emphasise that alternative education programmes must be carefully designed to meet girls' learning needs and work closely with government partners and community actors to address barriers to girls' education, rather than setting up a parallel system.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Adolescence is a critical time to lay the foundations for economic empowerment and can support girls' transitions to decent work.

- **Adolescent girls' economic capabilities can be supported through financial education and vocational or business training interventions**. Financial literacy education has stronger effects when combined with savings products. But it is integrated, multi-component economic empowerment interventions that appear most promising and able to achieve a broader set of empowerment outcomes, e.g. around SRH, GBV, self-esteem and voice.[105]
- **Interventions that support girls' transition to decent work.** For example, the DFID MUVA *Assistantes* programme is supporting urban adolescent girls to transition from secondary education to decent work in Mozambique through adapting an existing public works intervention to combine cash transfers plus intensive training and a one-year paid work experience.
- **Skills training combined with job placements** is a promising approach; e.g. *The Adolescent Girls Employment Initiative* (AGEI) programme in Nepal has shown girls' increased income, control over household expenditure, and increased self-confidence.[106]

COMPREHENSIVE SRHR

- **Training for SRHR professionals**, to avoid shaming adolescent girls seeking SRH care, including access to contraception. In contexts where laws prevent girls from receiving SRH care without their family or husband's consent, legal reform should accompany this.[107]

Adolescent girls face threats to their physical capabilities, in particular around SRHR, given risks of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and challenges in accessing healthcare.	• Given adolescent girls' poor mental health outcomes and links between GBV and poor mental health, particularly in FCAS and humanitarian settings, **invest in developing the skills of social and health extension workers** to also recognise and support adolescent girls' mental health needs. • Some organisations have begun to **integrate a focus on sexual orientation and gender identity** in SRHR programming, including Plan International, which has convened LGBT adolescent groups, as well as adapting the Stepping Stones manual in Ecuador with UNICEF and ActionAid to include models related to sexual orientation and gender identity.[108]
SOCIAL PROTECTION Well-designed social protection programmes have the potential to empower adolescent girls, but few programmes currently consider age and gender-inequalities.[109]	• **Tailored social protection programmes** that address context-specific risks and are inclusive of at-risk cohorts of adolescent girls and boys.[110] • **Cash-plus programming** that supports adolescent girls and their families with cash while also linking them to training and services. For example, the Tanzanian Government's cash transfer programme, the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) focuses on adolescent girls and boys aged 14-19. It combines social protection and economic empowerment interventions with SRH education and services.[111] • **Providing financial incentives**, including removing school fees, and providing cash transfers (CTs), scholarships and stipends to help overcome demand-side barriers to girls' school enrolment and attendance. CTs can reduce C/EFM, sexual violence, and early sexual debut[112], and there is emerging evidence that conditional CTs have a larger effect on delaying marriage and increasing safer sexual experiences when combined with empowerment components.[113] There is some, emerging evidence that conditional CTs can improve girls' uptake of education, especially when conditional on school attendance, however, there is still limited evidence that CTs would improve educational outcomes, as those are typically more reliant on quality education services.[114] More evidence is also needed on to whom the transfer should be made – and whether there is greater impact if made to male or female caregivers or directly to adolescent.[115] • **Ensure public works and social insurance programmes** are informed by a gender- and adolescent-responsive lens, for example Ghana's LEAP (Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty) automatically links cash transfers with health insurance, thereby providing vulnerable households with greater access to healthcare – important for adolescent girls.[116]

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