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## Recap Report: Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls at the Women Deliver 2023 Conference

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# Girls Deliver

PRE-CONFERENCE ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
KIGALI, RWANDA • 16 JULY 2023

## Recap Report:

# Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls at the Women Deliver 2023 Conference

 **WOMEN  
DELIVER 2023  
CONFERENCE**

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## **Introduction**

The [Girls Deliver: Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls](#) was held on July 16, 2023 in Kigali Rwanda to kick off the Women Deliver 2023 Conference. Girls Deliver was led by the Population Council’s Girl Innovation, Research, and Learning Center (GIRL Center) and co-hosted by AFIDEP, Amplify Girls, Baobab Research Programme Consortium, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, Coalition for Adolescent Girls, Exemplars in Global Health, FP2030, Girl Effect, Girls First Fund, Hilton Foundation, NDI, Plan International, PMNCH, Purposeful, Together for Girls, UNICEF, Women Deliver, and The World Bank Africa Gender Innovation Lab.

This recap report presents an overview of Girls Deliver, a summary of the discussions and key takeaways, as well as evidence-based resources that were developed to complement discussions at Girls Deliver.

## **Overview**

There are 1.8 billion adolescents and youth around the world today – the largest in history. Yet the adolescents and youth that represent the world’s future – especially girls and women<sup>1</sup> – continue to face major global challenges, and the ecosystem of stakeholders supporting adolescents and youth remains fragmented.

On July 16, 2023, the [Girls Deliver: Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls](#), led by the [Population Council’s GIRL Center](#) together with 18 co-hosts, convened the community of global stakeholders representing a variety of perspectives on supporting adolescent lives in the lead up to the Women Deliver 2023 Conference, and in view of the Global Forum for Adolescents in October 2023.

We welcomed 250 participants, across an array of sectors involved in supporting adolescent girls, for an inspiring day of evidence-based learning and action. Practitioners, donors, activists, researchers, policy makers, and leaders of grassroots and community organizations joined 40 adolescents and 50 youth participants for a diverse group of voices and perspectives (see Annex 3 for a list of organizations represented).

## **Pre-Conference Objectives**

- Create space for multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary conversations on how to apply a multidimensional approach to key topics related to adolescent health and well-being.
- Craft an ambitious agenda with an integrated feminist ecosystem that centers around the ‘whole girl,’ especially the most marginalized girls.
- Equip participants with concrete actions and next steps to apply a multidimensional approach to their work as part of an integrated feminist ecosystem for adolescents. For example, next steps and recommendations for:
  - Clear understanding of needs and gaps as informed by adolescents, researchers, advocates, and program implementors, complemented by response to these needs from policies and investments.
  - Continuous cycle of learning and action, driven by data and evidence.
  - Greater collaboration and synergies in efforts rather than duplication, across research, programs, policies, and funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Anyone who has been, personally identifies as, or has lived experience as a girl or woman

## Girls Deliver at a Glance

Dr. Karen Austrian, Population Council’s GIRL Center Director, opened the day’s proceedings and welcomed participants, who were then guided by co-MCs Divina Maloum, an adolescent advocate from Cameroon, and Lalita Tamang, an adolescent advocate from Nepal. Multisectoral opening plenary sessions featured powerful voices, including opening remarks by Vanessa Nakate (climate justice activist and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador), and a fireside chat between Stacey Abrams (NDI board member, political and nonprofit leader) and Malala Yousafzai (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Co-Founder of Malala Fund) together with younger adolescent girls advocates Condolizzarice Akumawah from Cameroon and Kalpa Garg from India.



Following the inspiring conversation between three generations of feminists, participants collaborated on 13 different thematic roundtable discussions led by our co-hosts exploring pressing issues that face adolescent girls worldwide, grounded in data and evidence. Themes included: adolescent mothers, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, agency, building girls’ political

power, economic empowerment, education, gender-based violence in adolescence, girls in humanitarian settings, girls in the digital space, girls-led climate action, government integration, holistic approach to adolescent girls’ health, and meaningful adolescent and girl engagement.

Participants shared their main reflections from Girls Deliver and action plans to support adolescents in multi-sectoral small group discussions. These outputs were captured as dynamic word clouds. Throughout Girls Deliver, the Adolescent Expo also offered participants a space for networking and booths for organizations, projects, and more, particularly those led by adolescents and those in LMICs.

The Pre-Conference created a dedicated space for multi-sectoral conversations elevating voices of adolescents and other stakeholders from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), fostered solidarity within the community, and promoted evidence-based solutions. Participants cultivated a multidimensional approach to adolescent well-being, co-created next steps to build an integrated feminist ecosystem for adolescents, and catalyzed action to advance gender equality.



*Photos: (Top, from left to right) Co-MCs Divina Maloum and Lalita Tamang with plenary speakers Malala Yousafzai, Stacey Abrams, Kalpa Garg, Condolizzarice Akumawah, and Vanessa Nakate (Bottom) Vanessa Nakate delivering the opening keynote address*

In addition to the focus on adolescent girls given their unique challenges and needs, conversations also took a holistic lens on adolescents and gender to unpack gendered differences in how girls and boys are affected differently across themes. The sessions and discussions were rooted in evidence which was made accessible to all audiences regardless of technical or non-technical background.

The Pre-Conference sought to equip participants with concrete next steps to apply a multidimensional approach to their work and gather these outputs as the foundation for a shared resource or guide for an integrated feminist ecosystem supporting adolescents. The initial key takeaways from the Pre-Conference were captured and shared with all attendees to amplify the messages throughout the main Women Deliver 2023 conference.

## **Key Messages**

### **Plenary Sessions**

The **opening keynote address** highlighted the importance of a multidimensional, holistic approach to adolescence and the need for action as an integrated feminist ecosystem.

*Speaker: [Vanessa Nakate](#), climate justice activist and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador*

- Girls do not lead single-issue lives. The climate crisis and gender inequality cut across every part of a girl's life – from nutrition, education, to unpaid domestic work like collecting water and childcare.
- To support girls' lives, we must take an integrated approach. Multi-sectoral, large-scale, girl-centered responses are required.
- We must put girls' voices, agency, and leadership at the heart of our work.
- Call for 1 billion US dollars in new investments from international community for targeted multisector programming with adolescent girls by 2025. A significant increase in resources is also needed for girl-led groups.
- With the passion, skills, and leadership of girls, anything is possible.

A **fireside chat** convened three generations of feminists from around the world, who shared their experiences, insights, and calls to action.

*Speakers: [Condolizzarice Akumawah](#), adolescent advocate from Cameroon; [Kalpa Garg](#), adolescent advocate from India; [Malala Yousafzai](#), Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Co-Founder of Malala Fund; [Stacey Abrams](#), NDI board member, political and nonprofit leader*

- The courage and determination of adolescent girls is undeniable, and it is the responsibility of adults to create space for girls and young women in rooms of power and influence.

- The challenges facing girls are all interconnected, and should be addressed together in order to ensure better quality of life for girls. We must move out of working in silos.
- Support for marginalized girls is crucial, due to their limited access to critical information and services. This includes challenging the legal and cultural barriers that leave girls out.
- Local activism is powerful to hear the voices of those directly affected by crises. At the same time, we need collective advocacy and voice.
- There is a need for a global coalition for the empowerment of girls and their education. Empowerment of girls needs to be a priority for more global leaders, not only to create policies, but also to implement them.
- Believe in adolescent girls, include adolescent girls, and co-create with adolescent girls. All girls have the right to power - to be in charge and to demand better.



The **plenary panel session** featured representatives from research, policy, and advocacy, who spoke about their role in the integrated ecosystem of actors advancing gender equality for adolescents, and how their action can be guided by evidence.

*Speakers:* [Karen Austrian](#), GIRL Center Director (moderator); Yosimbom Jania Ney, adolescent advocate from Cameroon; [Caroline Kabiru](#), Head of Population Dynamics and Reproductive Health, African Population and Health Research Center; [Maliha Khan](#), President and CEO, Women Deliver; [Hana Brixi](#), Global Director for Gender Equality, The World Bank Group

- Adolescent girls must be in the center of the global agenda, supported by a coalition focusing on the next generation of girls.
- To ensure that evidence and data drives policy and practice, researchers must nurture relationships with policymakers, prioritize mutual capacity strengthening among stakeholders, and better communicate and synthesize research in ways that resonate with people more broadly, including young people.
- To move toward more holistic, integrated programming for girls, it is important to identify lessons from multi-sectoral programs that have worked. These are fundamental building blocks toward lasting, sustainable solutions for girls.
- An integrated gender strategy must have adolescent girls at the center. The World Bank shared its gender strategy, which will focus on: ending gender-based violence and elevate human capital by empowering girls and shifting gender norms; expanding and enabling economic opportunities; and engaging girls and women as leaders.
- In order to achieve gender equality, we must go beyond focusing on specific programs to empower this generation of adolescent girls to address systems of oppression.
- It is critical to work together on who is included 'at the table.' We must grow a movement to solve the pressing global challenges facing adolescent girls, including working with boys and men to shift their mindsets.
- An integrated ecosystem of actors must act as a coalition, that includes voices of girls, activists, researchers, advocacy groups, government, and practitioners, to make change with and for adolescent girls.



Photo: (Left to right) Karen Austrian, Caroline Kabiru, Maliha Khan, Hana Brix, Yosimbom Jania Ney



## Concurrent Thematic Roundtable Sessions

- **Adolescent Mothers: From Cautionary Tales to Partners** (organized by Hilton Foundation)

A moderated panel shared insights from research focused on young mothers and young mothers reflected on the findings and how those engaged in programming, policy and funding can translate these findings into better practice. Participants discussed how they can deepen partnerships with young mothers to advance their efforts in social work.

*Speakers: Saskia Guerrier, Hilton Foundation; Jody Myrum, Our Collective Practice; Ramatu Bangura, Children's Rights Innovation Fund; Hasna, young mother from Tanzania; Nadine, young mother from Mozambique; Ruth Graham-Goulder, UNICEF*

Main messages:

- Adolescent mothers face unique challenges as they strive to care for themselves and their children. They must also often contend with a deep sense of shame and isolation from their families.
  - We must engage adolescents themselves in the design of programs and policies that impact. Solutions proposed by adolescent mothers according to qualitative research that included focus group discussion with over 200 adolescent mothers across Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique include:
    - Safe spaces and psychological support
    - Respectful Youth-friendly health services
    - Opportunity to continue their education, safely
    - Livelihoods opportunities to care for herself and her children
  - It is crucial that decision-makers prioritize this particular vulnerable groups and that systems are more responsive to the unique needs of adolescent mothers and their children.
- **Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights** (Organized by AFIDEP, FP2030, Plan International, UNICEF)

A moderated panel discussion and open dialogue reviewed existing ASRHR programs and interventions, focusing on adolescent engagement and government integration in adolescent SRHR programs.

*Speakers: Leila Abdulkeir Isaak, AMREF Kenya; Shakira, adolescent from Ghana; Kudzaishe, adolescent from Zimbabwe; MaryBeth Hastings, FP 2030; Ruth Graham-Goulder, UNICEF*

Main messages:

- Social constraints, including cultural and religious beliefs, affect the delivery and accessibility of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) services. Inconsistency in policies, lack of coordination between agencies, and lack of political will also add barriers to accessing ASRHR services.
  - Adolescents and youth are not at the center of the development of programmes, interventions, policies that concern them. They are only called into these spaces as tokens without real input.
  - To address these barriers and challenges, we need to:
    - Include parents to create solid ASRHR foundations and engage parents in promoting ASRHR services.
    - Promote education for young girls support them to make informed decisions about their lives and improve adolescent engagement.
    - Continue creating platforms and channels that will amplify the adolescent girls' voice.
  - We must invest in and advance multisectoral approaches to ensure effective service delivery of ASRHR services.
  - It is crucial to develop data tools that will reflect true evidence to not only make evidence informed decision making but also create proper channels of integration.
- **Agency** (organized by AMPLIFY Girls)

Following a presentation on developing and defining girls' agency, small break-out sessions fostered interactive learning and exploring one's own definition of girls' agency, A panel discussed how various actors are implementing life-skills programs that impact agency for adolescent girls.

Speakers: Margaret Butler, AMPLIFY Girls; Anika Dorothy Jenne, AMPLIFY Girls; Zack Fowler, AMPLIFY Girls; Munira Umugwaneza, LWD Rwanda; Uwase Liliane, SACCA; Angelika Arutyunova, Resourcing Adolescent Girls Research Co-Lead

Main messages:

- Agency is a multi-dimensional construct. Although it is common in program evaluations to use more one-dimensional proxies as stand-in outcomes for agency, we know from both the literature and work with AMPLIFY Girls partners that agency is complex and should be acknowledged as such.
- The framework for agency that is used by AMPLIFY Girls presents agency as a combination of self-beliefs, environmental beliefs, self-governance skills, and leadership skills. This framework was created through work by AMPLIFY Girls partner organizations, staff, and Drs. Aubryn Sidle and Brenda Oulo.
- Agency is an important outcome measure for girls' life skills education programs. AMPLIFY Girls' longitudinal study suggests that agency can be used

as a metric in assessing the success of life skills-focused interventions, including those based in holistic education settings such as live-in boarding schools.

- Girls' agency is best understood as context-dependent and is affected and defined by aspects of gendered norms, economic opportunities, and other aspects of socio-economic structure, and girls' beliefs about these structures. Thus, approaches to measuring agency and developing agency-related programming are best addressed with strategies that prioritize local knowledge and local expertise, both of which can best capture the contexts affecting agency outcomes.
- Programs that improve girls' agency are likely holistic. Participatory research from the AMPLIFY Girls community shows that the programs most likely to improve girls' agency address multiple facets of her well-being and operate in multiple social settings (e.g. school and community, community and family).
- The outcome of this work: the production of a rigorous and reliable tool for measuring adolescent girls' agency. The AMPLIFY Girls Agency Survey, a psychometric tool created in collaboration with AMPLIFY Girls partners, offers an important example of the benefits of including local expertise in creating measurement tools for development. Data-driven evidence empowers AMPLIFY Girls partners to showcase their achievements and the tangible impact they create within their communities, using a tool developed from their own shared insights. The AMPLIFY Girls Agency Survey will be an important contribution to global policy discussions on how to accurately assess progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as they pertain to growing girls' agency.

- **Economic Empowerment** (organized by World Bank Africa Gender Innovation Lab)

A panel and open discussion explored what economic empowerment means for diverse segments of adolescent girls, why laying the foundation for later economic achievements is critical during adolescence, and what this looks like in terms of building adolescent girls' resources and agency while taking into account their context.

*Speakers: Kehinde Ajayi, Center for Global Development; Blessing, adolescent from Zambia; Wei Chang, World Bank; Rani Deshpande, CGAP*

Main messages:

- We must look at economic empowerment using a multi-dimensional framework. Economic empowerment is not simply a question of equipping adolescent girls with opportunities and resources, but also of ensuring that girls are able to exercise control over them.

- Education can happen in all spaces, not only in classrooms. We must ensure quality of education and include socioemotional skills instead of simply focusing on school attendance or completion. It is also important to focus on out of school girls and address their realities.
- Adolescent girls are not a homogenous group; they face different challenges and have diverse needs. We must tailor programs according to girls' life stages.

- **Feminism, Political Power and Adolescent Girls: A Push Back against the Co-option of Girls' Activism** (organized by Purposeful)

Through a panel, small group work, open discussion, the session created space for honest critique and reflection on how girls' activism is being sustained and, taking an ecosystem approach, what our roles should be as adult allies and formal institutions in girls' political power.

*Speakers: Rosa Bransky, Purposeful; Zeedah Meierhofer-Mangeli, Resource Centre for Girls; Fanta Toure-Puri, Girls First Fund; Gabrielle Bailey, CRIF*

Main messages:

- Across the world, girls are reclaiming spaces and institutions of power and resisting authoritarian regimes. Traditional programming that we see in the international development field does not speak to girls' political organising and activism. It increasingly adopts the language of girls' movements, power and activism yet it is not responding to their realities.
- The session heard from girl activists, funders and practitioners and explored the difference between resourcing resistance and funding development programs, with a critical eye on the conference space that has brought us together.
- There is no formula for working respectfully with girls. It's deeply relational work. Think about girls as your fellow comrades. Don't just extract.
- If you are in position to fund girls directly, do so flexibly and in a way that centres how they organise and how they can receive funding, recognising the diversity of girls and gender non-conforming adolescents and youth. Invest in participatory philanthropy.
- If you are a private funder or primarily fund through intermediaries, fund those that explicitly work with girls and centre their needs and priorities. Fund those who are unapologetically political. Invest in theirs and your own participatory philanthropy.

- **Education** (organized by Population Council and Girls First Fund)

A panel of leading practitioners, researchers, funders, and activists shared how their work is providing a pathway to a more inclusive and empowered educational landscape, one where all children are learning, and how we can collectively work towards advancing gender equity in and through education.

*Speakers: Sohini Bhattacharya, CEO, Breakthrough (India); Nassiratou Ali Djibi, CEO-Founder of Matassa project and GFF Changemakers Council, Niger; Lakshmi Moore, Program Director, Girls First Fund; Goretti Nakabugo, Executive Director, Uwezo Uganda; Nicole Haberland, Senior Associate, Population Council*

Main messages:

- Education is a powerful tool for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.
- Looking only at national level data erases disparities. Uwezo Uganda showed that disaggregating data - by gender, poverty, location, rural/urban, etc. - uncovers persistent gender gaps in education outcomes.
- Systemic change is needed to overcome the barriers and biases that perpetuate inequities in education - societies remain hostile to women
- Shifting inequitable gender norms is one critical strategy.
- Breakthrough's gender equity curriculum was evaluated and found changes in gender attitudes for girls and boys. Now Breakthrough is working on pushing media makers to come up with more equitable messages.
- Education can be a 'safer' entry point to address practices such as child marriage.
- When funding work in this space, core, flexible, and long term funding is key.
- Equally important is partnering with, listening to and learning from and with communities - build in the notion of humility. For example, GFF recently launched Changemakers Program which allows girls to take the lead
- More research is needed to inform policymakers and decisionmakers.

- **Gender-based Violence in Adolescence** (organized by Together for Girls and Baobab Research Programme Consortium)

An open discussion with survivors, researchers, and youth advocates explored strategies, lived experiences, and opportunities for using national-level data on gender-based violence (GBV) as well as intersecting issues to drive advocacy and action to prevent and end GBV, with a focus on adolescents and youth.

*Speakers: Chrissy Hart, Together for Girls; Manuela Baillet Ahogo, Together for Girls; Anisie Byukusenge, Purposeful, Rwanda; Kanga Rasi, Brave Movement; Oueperi Yolande Farida Pardevan, youth advocate from Burkina Faso*

Main messages:

- Research and the use of data, particularly from Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys, has been instrumental in contributing to reductions in violence for instance by informing national policies and programming in Kenya, a country which implemented two VACS in 2010 and 2019, and other countries in the African region.
- Yet, there is a lack of comprehensive and aggregated data on violence that is also contextualized to different demographics. Better intersection analysis that draws linkages and helps align with stakeholder action is needed.
- Lived experiences are crucial components that shape advocacy against gender-based violence, as well as qualitative analysis embedded within VACS. Behind statistics are stories and real people, and it is important to amplify their voices. Special attention should be paid to girls with vulnerabilities, those with disabilities, and those living in fragile contexts.
- Great participation in the knowledge production and management process is needed – by involving those disproportionately affected and marginalized across surveys and research stages to improve data accessibility and strengthen understanding on the process, content and outcomes of studies such as VACS.

- **Girls in Humanitarian Settings** (organized by Plan International)

Girls from West and Central Africa and Middle East, East and Southern Africa demonstrated how their rights to protection from gender-based violence are critical to achieving humanitarian objectives in other sectors, such as child survival and education in this roundtable session.

*Speakers: Janada Medugu Gadzama, girl activist from Nigeria; Yosimbom Jania Ney, girl activist from Cameroon; Salamatou Allasane, youth activist from Niger; Oyella Eunice, youth activist from South Sudan; Hanadi Yusuf, youth activist from Ethiopia*

Main messages:

- Violations and needs related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) tend to multiply during the crisis, and food security crises are no exception; lack of resources and food exposes girls to increased risks such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child, early and forced marriages and unions (CEFMU) and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) .
- Government and all stakeholders must ensure the sexual and reproductive health and rights of children, adolescents and young people in all their diversities are protected and fulfilled before, during and after disasters and conflicts.

- All States must prioritize and invest in efforts to eliminate gender-based violence through implementation and monitoring of laws and policies which target the root causes of violence, promote gender equality, and ensure the unique needs of girls are met through an age and gender-responsive approach, including in humanitarian settings.
- Governments, donors and other humanitarian actors must be accountable to girls and young women and listen and respond to their priorities as they meaningfully participate in all phases of the crises and humanitarian actions.

- **Girls in the Digital Space** (organized by Girl Effect)

Through a hands-on, interactive session and facilitated discussion on digital technologies, participants explored the co-creation process and helped identify solutions and approaches for both rural and urban settings.

*Speakers: Joyce Wanderi, Girl Effect Chief Program Officer; Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Canada; Mia, Girl Effect Kenya Youth Advisory Panel; Veronicah Wakarima, Girl Effect*

Main messages:

- Mobile and digital spaces have the potential to transform the lives of girls, especially those who have scarce access to other media or educational tools. However, access is not equal. Affordability is also a huge barrier. The gender digital divide holds back girls and women in every aspect of their lives. Healthcare, online learning, careers and financial services, especially in LMICs.
- In addition to access, existing tech products and services are not built for girls. From design to prototype, user-testing to launch, girls and young women need to be involved at every stage. Involving young people in the design of tech solutions helps empower them and acknowledge that their opinions do matter.
- Experiences working with rural and urban girls in Kenya revealed challenges in privacy, confidentiality, and the overwhelming amount of information (on SRH services, for example) that are not always accurate, reliable, or trustworthy.
- Recommendations/action items:
  - Co-design tech solutions with girls at the center
  - Design to meet needs of urban and rural girls

- **Girls-led Climate Action** (organized by UNICEF and PMNCH)

The roundtable featuring a panel and group discussion spotlighted success stories, innovative solutions, and best practices for girls-led climate action at the local and global level and their impact on their communities and international climate change advocacy efforts.

*Speakers:* Lucy Fagan, UNMGCY, U.K.; Beninama Enorah Gladys, World Association of Girls Guides and Girls Scouts, Rwanda; Mona Al Ajrami, Gender and Climate Justice Activist, Jordan; Brenda Mwale, Founder, Green Girls Platform, Malawi; Ineza Umuhoza Grace, Founder, The Green Protector, Rwanda; Vanessa Nakate, Climate Activist and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Main messages:

- Intergenerational solidarity can be challenging in decision-making spaces, therefore it is important to create spaces that naturally brings people of different age groups together, around a common interest.
- Girls-led climate action are often borne out of lived experiences of the climate crisis - disasters, displacement, scarcity, etc. Adolescent girls are also often not full-time activists and needs to juggle many competing priorities, and it can be difficult to maintain momentum amidst the obligations
- Mental health is a key but often overlooked aspect when it comes to girls-led climate action - this needs to be integrated into the programming.
- More funding needs to be dedicated to girls-led movements which prioritizes girls' agendas. Governments also need to prioritize investing in girls' education which will empower them for climate action. There must be more dedicated efforts to bring girls into decision-making spaces.

- **Government Integration** (organized by CIFF and FP2030)

The session helped establish a baseline understanding of the capacity of governments to pursue policy integration in the context of empowerment, education, health, and wellness-related social determinants for adolescent girls.

*Speakers:* Yvette Kathurima, Children's Investment Fund Foundation; Senator Catherine M. Mumma, Parliament of Kenya; Margaret Bolaji, FP2030; Elizabeth Talatu Williams, AFRIYAN Nigeria Coordinator; Madina, Save the Children Nigeria Girl Champion and Member of the Children's Parliament in Nigeria

Main messages:

- Policy integration in government is central to realizing the social determinants for adolescent girls but a key challenge exists in complex governance systems that often operate in silos.
- We must recognise that the government in place drives policy and this often an inhibiting factor when their policies have prohibitive clauses.
- There is a need to bridge gaps between civil society, government, and young people by ensuring that they are all present in the same spaces when it comes to policy discussion.



- Part of ensuring this is the meaningful participation and engagement of adolescents and youth in technical working groups where young people are able to demonstrate their value-add to governments - and can make meaningful contributions, and not just occupy space (tokenistic participation).
  - For their meaningful engagement, adolescent girls can be supported by extra training and peer to peer briefings in the use of data and evidence to support evidence-based advocacy.
  - In addition to meaningful adolescent and youth engagement during policy formation, girls must also be involved at implementation levels. There is currently a lack of implementation of laws applying to young women and girls, which would be key to their well-being.
  - Public health policies tend to talk about rights more broadly and often consider adolescents as homogenous. They do not specifically address adolescent rights enough to be able to deliver on their particular needs.
  - Governments should conduct and/or continue ongoing analysis to see gaps in laws and where these leave adolescents underserved.
  - Children’s Parliaments were noted as best practices in creating safe spaces for adolescents to present problems and possible solutions to challenges they are facing.
- **Holistic Approach to Adolescent Girls’ Health** (organized by Exemplars in Global Health)

This collaborative roundtable featured the research framework of the new Exemplars in Global Health Women’s Health and Wellbeing project and helped define health and wellbeing across 10 interconnected dimensions. A panel shared success stories in meeting adolescent needs across dimensions.

*Speakers: Asha George, University of the Western Cape; Caroline Kabiru, African Population and Health Research Center; Merette Khalil, White Ribbon Alliance; Faith Malenga, Girls Empowerment Network*

**Main Messages:**

- It is important to have a holistic approach to understand women’s health and wellbeing and adopt a life course approach; adolescent health is a critical life stage that can really change the trajectory for later life.
- Adolescents and young women in the community should be setting the agenda based on their definition of wellbeing and their needs. We need to have conversations with young people and include their voices in the programs, setting the research agenda, designing solutions.
- The diversity among adolescents and young girls needs to be acknowledged/ For instance, some might want to go to school, but some might need vocational training or life skills/business management/financial literacy.

- Need to learn from examples that have been successful and are cost-effective to address adolescent health and wellbeing.
- Education is really important - there are experts in early childhood development and there can be guidance on how to have age-appropriate sex education. The importance of mental health for adolescent health and wellbeing, as well as engaging men and boys in conversations were also highlighted.
- There is demographic and health survey data suggesting young people have sex before age 15 but the government policies (for example in Kenya) do not address these issues until they turn 18 or reach adulthood. Getting data on 10-14-year-olds is important to drive the programs for this age group.
- Funders have to be bolder and need to think big as multisectoral programs require money and they can't be short-term.

- **Meaningful Adolescent and Girl Engagement** (organized by PMNCH)

The session provided a platform for adolescents to share lived experiences and for PMNCH partners to share successful practices of creating safe and inclusive spaces for adolescent voices, by employing Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE) guidelines. Participants discussed solutions on how to ensure policy makers leverage existing resources and mechanisms.

*Speakers: Lucy Fagan, UNMGCY; Darshana Rijal, PMNCH Adolescent leader; Flavia Bustreo, Fondation Botnar; Sahil Tandon, Packard Foundation*

Main messages:

- Successful implementation of meaningful adolescent and youth engagement (MAYE) involves involving adolescents and young people from the very beginning of policy and program design. By implementing the MAYE principles and learning from successful examples, organizations can create policies and programs that truly reflect the needs, aspirations, and potential of adolescents and youth.
- MAYE requires ongoing commitment and resources. It is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that needs to be woven into the fabric of organizational culture. This includes funding for training, capacity building, and creating platforms for youth participation. Leadership commitment is crucial, and efforts should be integrated into organizational strategies to ensure consistent support for youth engagement over time.
- To ensure policies and programs address a wide array of perspectives and needs, it is crucial to engage a diverse group of adolescents from different backgrounds, including those from marginalized communities. Create inclusive spaces that encourage the participation of adolescents of all genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, abilities, and orientations.

- Collaboration between stakeholders is essential to collectively address these challenges and provide the necessary support for meaningful adolescent and youth engagement at scale. Collaborate with adolescents as equal partners in decision-making. Foster a sense of co-creation where their ideas are incorporated into policy and program design.
- Facilitate partnerships between governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and youth-led organizations to collaboratively design and implement strategies for youth engagement.
- Integrate civic education into learning environments to equip adolescents and young people with knowledge about global issues, policy processes, and their rights. Offer programs that build the capacities of young leaders, enabling them to effectively engage with global platforms, negotiate with stakeholders, and advocate for their perspectives.



## Small Group Discussions

Participants were assigned to multi-sectoral small groups to collaboratively reflect on the various sessions at Girls Deliver and apply their takeaways to discuss concrete next steps and actions to build an integrated feminist ecosystem for adolescents. In lieu of a report-back session, each group summarized and submitted their highlights and action items, in response

*Photos: Girls Deliver participants collaborate in concurrent thematic roundtable discussions*





## **5 Key Calls to Action**

Girls Deliver participants joined their voices to call for key actions to advance gender equality, foster a multidimensional approach to adolescent well-being, and build an integrated feminist ecosystem for adolescents.

### **1. Unite for action.**

Delegates called for unity among the many different types of actors that are working to support adolescent girls worldwide – from researchers, advocacy groups, program implementers, to policymakers, and more. They acknowledged the strength and power of a more integrated ecosystem to tackle the major global issues facing adolescent girls, such as the climate crises and rising social and economic inequality, leveraging the synergies between each actor’s expertise and perspectives.

### **2. Enhance holistic approaches to girls’ lives.**

The daily lives of adolescent girls are not centered around single, individual issues, whether it be education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, economic empowerment, or climate change. Rather, girls’ lives are shaped by the complex interconnections between these pressing issues. In order to support adolescent girls as a whole, the ecosystem of actors must move out of working in thematic silos to take an integrated approach with adolescents at the center.

### **3. Drive action with data and evidence.**

The discussions indicated a need to better integrate data and evidence into multisectoral conversations, ensuring that quality, accessible data on adolescents reaches those that need it most to improve the lives of adolescent girls. Equally important is to utilize the data and evidence to shape resource allocation as well as program and policy implementation to impact areas and populations of greatest need with approaches proven to be effective.

### **4. Increase investments in adolescent programs and adolescent activists.**

Many participants, especially adolescent speakers, emphasized that adolescent programs, adolescent girl-led programs, and adolescent activists remain under resourced. Delegates urged governments, donors and the private sector to urgently invest resources in integrated, interdisciplinary work that supports the holistic needs of adolescent girls.

### **5. Create space for girls to lead.**

The integrated ecosystem for adolescent girls requires a large constituency of adolescent girls to meaningfully participate and lead – not just on their own, but building cohesion with all other stakeholders. Girls Deliver’s convening of over 90 adolescents and youth was a great start, and moving forward, the ecosystem of actors will need to make sure that adolescent girls continue to be included in conversations and creation of solutions as stakeholders and leaders.

## Continuing the Momentum

We are inspired by the passion and commitment toward building an integrated, feminist ecosystem for the rising generation of adolescent girls. Girls made sure their voices were heard, urging all those present to believe in, include, and co-create with them.

However, solidarity and collaboration cannot stop with the conclusion of the Girls Deliver Pre-Conference and the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali. The drive to continue the momentum was evident among all stakeholders - to build a coalition of action for adolescent girls that continues in the spirit of an integrated ecosystem, centering on girls and grounded in data and evidence. The GIRL Center is committed to continuing to lead in this space and work in close collaboration with partners and the networks created via Girls Deliver.



## **ANNEX 1: Roundtable Data Briefs**

- [Adolescent Mothers: From Cautionary Tales to Partners](#)
- [Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#)
- [Agency](#)
- [Economic Empowerment](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Gender-based Violence in Adolescence](#)
- [Girls in Humanitarian Settings](#)
- [Girls in the Digital Space](#)
- [Girls-led Climate Action](#)
- [Government Integration](#)
- [Holistic Approach to Adolescent Girls' Health](#)
- [Meaningful Adolescent and Girl Engagement](#)

## **ANNEX 2: Videos**

- [Girls Deliver Highlights](#)
- [Full Recording: Opening Keynote Address and Fireside Chat](#)

## **ANNEX 3: List of organizations represented at Girls Deliver**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Adolescent Girls Investment Plan                  | • CEECCNA Collaborative Fund                             |
| • African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) | • Cellule Nigérienne des Jeunes Filles Leader (CNJFL)    |
| • African Population and Health Research Center     | • Center for Global Development                          |
| • AMPLIFY GIRLS                                     | • CGAP   |
| • ATHENA Network                                    | • Chalk Back   |
| • Batida/PMNCH                                      | • Children for Peace                                     |
| • Bayer AG  | • Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)           |
| • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation                   | • Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF)               |
| • Brands on a Mission                               | • Children's Voice Today                                 |
| • Breakthrough                                      | • Co-Impact  |
| • Caminante Proyecto Educativo                      | • Confederación Nacional de Mujeres del Campo (CONAMUCA) |
| • CARE USA  | • Conrad N. Hilton Foundation                            |
| • Cartier Philanthropy                              |  |
| • CCNEJ   |  |



- CREHPA
- Dasra
- Development Dynamics
- Echidna Giving
- Educate Girls
- Equal Measures 2030
- Equality NOW
- EVIDHAF
- Exemplars in Global Health
- FATE Consulting Ltd
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany (BMZ)
- FHI 360
- Firelight Foundation
- Fondation CHANEL
- FP2030
- GAGE / ODI
- Gates Ventures
- Girl Effect
- Girls First Fund
- Girls Get Equal Network
- Girls' Globe
- Girls To Lead Africa
- Global Fund For Women
- Global G.L.O.W.
- Global Innovation Fund
- Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
- Green Girls Platform
- GURD-Rwanda
- Impanuro Girls Initiative
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology - School of Public Health
- Learn Work Develop (LWD)
- Les Ailes Du Coeur
- Malala Fund
- Malawi Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
- Ministry of Information And Civic Education for Sierra Leone
- MSD
- Musawah
- Na'leb'ak
- NDI
- Ni Nyampinga
- No Mean No Worldwide
- Obama Foundation
- ODI - GAGE
- Office of Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State
- Our Collective Practice
- Our Sister's Opportunity
- Paper Crown Rwanda
- Parliament of Kenya (Senate)
- Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH)
- Plan International
- Plan International Burkina Faso
- Plan International Nigeria
- Plan International Zimbabwe
- Population Council
- Population Services International (PSI)
- Population Services Kenya
- Purposeful
- Regional Development Cooperation in Africa, Embassy of Sweden Addis Ababa
- RENAJ
- Resource Center For Women and Girls
- SACCA
- SAFIA center
- Save the Children
- School for Children With Disability, Mataram City, Indonesia
- School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape
- SRHR Africa Trust
- Super Banat Chad
- The ELMA Philanthropies Services
- The World Bank
- Together for Girls

- U.S. Department of State
- UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
- UNESCO
- UNGEI
- UNICEF
- United States Agency for International Development
- University of Oxford - Accelerate Hub
- UNMGCY
- Urafiki Girls Organization
- Uwezo Uganda
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- Women Deliver
- Women's Refugee Commission
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
- World Vision International
- YIELD Hub
- YLabs
- Young Changemakers Foundation
- YourEgyptianDoula/WRA
- Youth for change and empowerment
- Youth Voices & Action Initiative (YVAI)
- Yuwa India
- ZanaAfrica

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African Institute for Development Policy

 **AMPLIFY GIRLS**

 **Baobab**  
Supporting Evidence-Based Research on Adolescent Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa

 **CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION**

 **THE COALITION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS**  
POVERTY ENDS WITH HER

 **EXEMPLARS**  
IN GLOBAL HEALTH

 **FP 2030**

 **Girl Effect**

 **Girls First Fund**

 **CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION**

 **NDI**  
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

 **PLAN INTERNATIONAL**

 **PMNCH**  
Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health

 **Purposeful**

 **Together for girls**  
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

 **unicef**

 **WOMEN DELIVER**

 **GENDER INNOVATION LAB**