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Scaling for change: Strategic investment in the poorest girls in the poorest communities

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Why Girls?
Investing in girls is essential to achieving the MDGs and rebalancing the population resource equation.

Which Girls?
We have the data to target regional hotspots with the poorest girls and highest ROI.

When to Intervene?
AHEAD of the curve and EARLY enough to make a difference.

What Is Needed?
Communities to fulfill their commitments to provide core social, health, and economic assets and social programs to ensure girls’ ability to claim them.
Why Girls?
Investing in the poorest girls so they may hold on to their childhood and defer childbearing past adolescence is a GOOD in and of itself and could reduce population size by 18 percent, or 224 million, a full 39 percent of the anticipated increase.
Kenya
Malawi
Ethiopia
Zimbabwe

A high proportion of girls will become **single mothers**

Failure to invest in them is **planned poverty**

**Why Girls?**

Cumulative percent of girls who will ever be a single mother


With support from Population Council and Nike Foundation.
Why Girls? Summing Up

Larger economic pie +
More equitably distributed

Increase productive capacity
and expand economic
participation and
intergenerational investment

Reduce the dependency
burden by increasing age
at first birth and reducing
poverty-driven demand
for children
Which Girls?

We have the data to find at-risk girls who, with investment, provide our best bet for:

- Increasing the space between generations
- Improving health
- Fostering sustainable expansion
- More equitable sharing of income and increased intergenerational investment
Which Girls?
In Ethiopia, **girl-centered interventions** in high-risk regions have succeeded in increasing the age of marriage, keeping girls in school, and providing health support to the youngest first-time mothers.

Girls married by age 15 reach **42%**

When to Intervene?

EARLY enough to keep girls in school and build their health, social, and economic assets

Percent of Guatemalan girls ages 10–19, by outcome

Girls begin dropping out of school at the onset of puberty

Intensify investment here  Drop out accelerates here

Sources: Guatemala (Hallman et al. 2005); Turkey and Kenya (Population Council Adolescent Data Guides 2009, relying on DHS 2003); Egypt (ELMPS 2006).
What Is Needed?
Correct the current investment failure to reach the critical bottom 40% of girls.

- secondary school
- youth center
- community center
- roads and market
- development committee
- health center
- playing field
- national savings

Better-off girls
Boys
Poorer Girls
(cut off from access to services)
What is Needed?

What Girls Need by Age 12: A Basic Toolkit

- At least five friends (her team)
- Community girl-only place/space/platform to meet them
- A nonfamily, slightly older female mentor
- Personal documentation (for citizenship rights, health, and livelihoods)
- Age-graded life skills such as health information and financial literacy
- Incubator savings
What is Needed? Public-private partnerships hand in hand with girls

+ To ensure basic entitlements, services, and facilities

secondary school  development committee  roads and market  youth center  playing field  community center  national savings  health center

+ To create community-based places/spaces/platforms in which girls thrive and through which they claim their rights.