**Submission to the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls in response to the call for inputs to inform the thematic report on girls’ activism**

**About the *“She Leads”* consortium**

The *“She Leads”* consortium welcomes this[call for submissions](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/Girls-youth.aspx) and the timely topic of the upcoming report of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls on girls’ activism.

*“She Leads”* is a joint programme of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children - ECPAT the Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), and Terre des Hommes the Netherlands (TdH-NL).[[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2) Equal Measures 2030 is a technical partner. The She Leads consortium, which will run from 2021-2025, aims to increase sustained influence of girls and young women (GYW) on decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions. The consortium envisages to achieve this goal by working through three interrelated domains:

1. Civil society domain: the enhancement of collective action of girls and young women in a gender-responsive civil society;
2. Socio-cultural domain: support by increased acceptance of positive social gender norms;

The geographic focus of the programme is East Africa (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya), West Africa (Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia) and the Middle East (Lebanon, Jordan). In addition to programming in these countries, a considerable part of the programming is done at regional level (beyond the programme countries), targeting regional institutions and other stakeholders operating at regional level.

1. **Nature, modalities and trends of girls’ and young women’s activism**
   1. **Global**

Girl activists are organising as effective drivers of change, and are becoming more visible than ever. Over the last several years, media coverage of girl activists has skyrocketed. Some have gained celebrity status, such as Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate activist, Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani education advocate, or others like Emma González, a gun control advocate. These trends in the media are a reflection of what we see in the real world: girls all across the globe are increasingly standing up to challenge gender inequality, exclusion and injustice. The global increase of young people’s involvement in civic space accounts for many breakthroughs worldwide[[3]](#footnote-3).

Girls are increasingly using the internet as a central locus for their activism work. The internet can be a powerful tool for advancing gender equality, enabling girls to fulfil their potential and pursue their ambitions as leaders and civic actors. It can also amplify the voices of adolescent girls, bringing together ideas and minds across borders and cultures.

Oftentimes excluded from participating in formal processes, girls and young women are increasingly exploring other ways to participate and we are witnessing a rise in diverse, intersectional and de-centralised youth movements, grassroots activism and collective action[[4]](#footnote-4). Support for girl and young women influencers in particular should be tied to additional support mechanisms including safe spaces, engagement of men, boys and families, networking and mentor programmes. Increasingly, investment in self-care, collective wellbeing and resilience are being viewed as vital political strategies in and of themselves. As well as increased support in managing safety and self-care, young people have identified what they need to better support their collective action: multiyear flexible funding[[5]](#footnote-5), networking and mentoring opportunities, new capacities and skills, and access to decision-makers.

* + 1. **A word on terminology**

There is a need to clarify and standardize terminology surrounding girls’ leadership, participation and activism. Frequently, terms such as “engagement”, “participation” and “activism” are used interchangeably, where there are important differences in definitions. It is important to clarify differences between engaging girls in adult-led decision-making processes (or supporting their participation in such processes), and activism that is truly led by girls. Additionally, there is confusion around the terms “girl advocate”, “girl-led activism”, “girl-centred initiatives”, “young feminist”, “girl human rights defender” and others. The report of the Working Group could serve to demystify what is meant by these various terms and provide some guidance on which to use in what contexts, safeguarding concerns surrounding certain terms, and which terminology girls themselves prefer.[[6]](#footnote-6)

We would define some of the key terms in the following manner:

*Terminology to describe girls’ actions to push for social change:*

* **Participation:** a concept core to a human rights-based approach, participation in public affairs (sometimes referred to as “participation in public and political life”) is enshrined in international human rights law[[7]](#footnote-7). Strictly speaking, “participation” refers to three elements: (a) the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs; (b) the right to vote and to be elected; and (c) the right to have access to public service.[[8]](#footnote-8) In the context of girls’ (or children’s and young people’s) participation, often connotes the participation of girls, children or young people in *adult-led processes. “*Participation” is usually associated with formal public or political processes (rather than informal organising or activities). Although in theory according to Roger Hart’s ladder of participation[[9]](#footnote-9), the term “participation” goes from consultation in adult-led processes at the bottom all the way to co-creation and child-led processes. However, in practice, child participation rarely leaves the consultation stage.
* **Active citizenship:** An individual’s civil, political, social and economic human rights define what can be expected and demanded from the state. Active citizenship involves individuals or groups taking action to ensure those rights are upheld.[[10]](#footnote-10)
* **Political action:** Strategic activities undertaken alone or collectively to influence decisions, processes or institutions of the government or public affairs.[[11]](#footnote-11)
* **Activism:** Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, direct, or intervene in social, political, economic, or environmental reform with the desire to make changes in society toward a perceived greater good. Activism can be carried out within formal or informal public processes. In the context of girls’ activism, this term often connotes more *civil society-led processes*.
* **Collective action:** Involves a number of people planning and implementing concrete actions together to achieve change by either influencing decision makers to change formal or informal decision-making processes and outcomes and/or influencing relevant attitudes, behaviour and norms of target groups to create systemic social and political change. Collective action can be undertaken within a group or as a collective effort of multiple groups or networks. Girls and young people are frequently preferring to engage in collective (rather than individual) action as activists.[[12]](#footnote-12)

All of these forms of social action, when done meaningfully[[13]](#footnote-13), can be important elements in advancing girls’ and young women’s ability to have an influence on society. It is therefore important that stakeholders who play a role in facilitating girls’ activism, including governments, civil society organisations, and donors, recognise the different ways in which they engage, whether that be within or outside of formal political processes, whether in adult-led or girl-led actions.

*Terminology to describe girls who are engaging in the above activities*

* **Activists:** Children, adolescents and youth, particularly girls and young women, taking (often collective) action for systemic change and conflict transformation.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* **Advocates:** The term “advocate” can be largely defined in the same way as “activist”. However, children and young people are navigating their own social, cultural and political environments as activists. In certain contexts, the term “activist” may not be appropriate, and they may choose to identify as “advocates”, “youth leaders”, “influencers” or change makers.
* **Young feminist:** According to FRIDA, “the term “feminist” broadly refers to individuals and collectives working within women’s movements or in other social movements to promote and work towards the safety, equality, justice, rights and dignity of girls, women and other marginalized groups...We define young feminist activists as individuals from across the gender spectrum committed to advancing gender equality and women’s rights through explicitly feminist means.”
  + Note: not all girl activists are young feminists or would identify themselves as such. In the same way as not all women are or identify themselves as feminists, many girls espouse and promote values that are not in line with feminism. What’s more, the term “feminist” is contentious in many contexts, and some girls and young women, although promoting gender equality, may not identify with the term because of the connotations it has in their context.
* **Human rights defenders:** Individuals, groups and associations contributing to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals. It encompasses anyone working for the promotion and protection of human rights, even on an occasional basis. Children have been increasingly recognised as human rights defenders, notably with the 2018 Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Day of General Discussion on the theme.[[15]](#footnote-15) In some countries, however, children may choose not to call themselves human rights defenders, as the term can put them at greater risk.
  + 1. **How young feminists organise**

As stated above, not all girl activists identify as young feminists. However, with regards specifically to those who do fall under the categorization of “young feminists”, a few key elements can be identified.

* **Young feminists challenge patriarchy:** young feminists openly and unabashedly challenge patriarchal power dynamics. They use a combination of strategies to influence social norms[[16]](#footnote-16) [[17]](#footnote-17).
* **Young feminists structure differently:** young feminists do not only push back against harmful norms in their work; they also use the structures of their organisations as ways to challenge power structure and transform societies. They focus on power sharing and emphasizing practicing feminist values, drawing on consensus, co-leadership and participatory decision-making models.[[18]](#footnote-18)
* **Young feminists organise informally:** many young feminist organisations are not legally registered. This may be by choice, as a way to remain unconstrained and embody feminist principles. These groups may use host organisations or umbrella structures to receive financial or capacity development support. However, for many, lack of legal registration is not by choice but rather a result of legal, administrative and financial barriers. The process may be too costly, they may be required to have a bank account, or there may be minimum age requirements for registering. Lack of registration poses additional challenges to these groups, which will be explored later.[[19]](#footnote-19)
* **Young feminists work across issues:** Girls and young women activists very rarely campaign on one social justice issue, but seek to understand the complexities that come with advocating on intersecting issues and so not only tend to organise within movements but across them too.
  + 1. **Intersectionality and diversity**

While one can make generalisations about the ways in which girls organise, the fact is that there is significant diversity based on context and multiple factors that intersect to create a person’s identity. Girls with multiple intersecting identities are typically the most marginalised, and thus need the most focused attention, whether based on sexual orientation and gender identity, race, class, religion, indigeneity, or whether they have a disability. For example, a recent report found that “women and girls with disabilities have historically encountered many barriers to participation in public decision-making, due to power imbalances and multiple forms of discrimination, they have had fewer opportunities to establish or join organisations that can represent their needs as women and persons with disabilities”.[[20]](#footnote-20) According to Plan International’s 2020 Free to Be Online?[[21]](#footnote-21) research, 37% of the girls and young women who identified themselves to be from an ethnic minority said they get harassed because of their ethnicity or race. 56% of the girls who identified themselves as LGBTQIA+ and had experienced harassment said that they get harassed because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Here is a small selection of examples of the ways in which different groups of girls are organising:

*Black girls’ activism*

Young black women and girls have been at the forefront of movements for racial equality and police brutality, including the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. For example, a group of 6 girls ages 14-16 were responsible for the organisation of a protest of 10,000 people in Tennessee, United States in June 2020 following the murder of George Floyd.[[22]](#footnote-22) 17-year-old Tiana Day organised a similar protest with thousands of people blocking the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge.[[23]](#footnote-23)

These girls have all expressed the intersecting racism and sexism they have experienced in the context of their activism. In an interview with The New York Times, Brianna Chandler, a young activist in the BLM movement, said that people believe that, “black women have to say things nicely, or they have to say things using standard English, or that they’re ignorant if they speak using African-American vernacular English. I think what the world gets wrong is that the anger of Black women isn’t valid — and it is. It’s more valid than I think any white person can comprehend.” Zee Thomas, one of the organisers of the Tennessee protest, said that “I also want people to know that we’re not strong all the time. We’re allowed to be weak. We are teenagers, we’re young women, and we’re allowed to be emotional, especially when we see people of our skin color getting killed.”

*Indigenous girls’ activism*

Indigenous girls and young women all over the world are leading the fight for climate justice and the sustainable use of natural resources, from the Brazilian Amazon[[24]](#footnote-24),[[25]](#footnote-25) to the Philippines[[26]](#footnote-26) to Canada.[[27]](#footnote-27)

In an interview conducted by Plan International in the context of an online campaign[[28]](#footnote-28) for the International Day of the Girl in October 2021, Julia Maria, an indigenous girl activist from Guatemala, as well as Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, a Member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues shared some of the challenges that indigenous girls and young women face in conducting their activism. Ms. Ibrahim shared that one issue is language: oftentimes in order to engage in advocacy at the national, regional or international level, they are required to speak a national language or one of the UN languages, which is often not the case for indigenous girls and young women with low levels of education.[[29]](#footnote-29) Both Ms. Ibrahim and Julia pointed to the fact that although digital technologies have opened doors for many indigenous girls and young women to make their voices heard like never before, there remains the challenges of lack of income for purchasing devices and data, and the lack of internet connection and even electricity in many of the rural areas in which indigenous girls and young women live.

*LGBTQIA+ activism*

In many countries, girls identifying as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and others, face incredible stigma when speaking publicly against human rights abuses they and members of their communities face. Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity remain at best taboo in many parts of the world, and at worst illegal. Girls identifying as LGBTQIA+ are victims of hate crimes as well as government silencing and crackdowns, both online and offline.[[30]](#footnote-30) According to the OHCHR, “Laws that, directly or indirectly, criminalize people on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity further exacerbate violence and discrimination. This includes ‘antigay propaganda’ laws that arbitrarily restrict rights to freedom of expression and assembly and threaten the work of LGBTQIA+ organisations and human rights defenders. Although it is claimed that these laws protect children, the result is, typically, the exact opposite: they result in violence against children and young activists who speak up against abuses. These and other discriminatory laws go against international human rights standards and should be repealed.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

* + 1. **Knowledge gaps**

Although challenges that girl activists experience are the same around the world, each context is different and requires specific knowledge to understand what the most impactful enabling factors are. Therefore, research that examines the wide differences in the understanding of participation, the systems that influence participation, and the gender dynamics, social norms, and practices that impact how women/girls and men/boys participate is necessary to implement adapted strategies, as well as to better understand how intersectional discrimination, relating to age, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, may impact participation of girls. In fact, there is little research exploring leadership development and civic participation among youth, and even less among young women[[32]](#footnote-32).

Despite the increasing interest in girls’ studies over the last two decades, Emily Bent found that “the research on girls and politics is surprisingly incomplete” and invisible [[33]](#footnote-33). Most of the work in the fields of girls’ studies, youth studies, and children’s rights focuses on their future impact on politics rather than girls’ current activism. However, the relevance of girls’ current political activities is undeniable: several international studies cited by Bent found that girls valued political participation as much or more than boys, although some view it as a masculine arena.

Finally, there are new approaches on how to measure and report on girls’ participation that are no longer based only on the presence of enabling factors which support participation – such as availability of safe spaces and social and cultural norms - but also on the impact of such participation on girls’ well-being. The aim is to understand whether they have the opportunities and skills to influence decision-making processes, share perspectives and participate as citizens and actors of change [[34]](#footnote-34).

* 1. **Regional spotlights**
     1. **Africa**

In West Africa, girl and young women activists tend to be based in schools (secondary or university). This is because higher education provides the space and connections for girls and young women to organise. They tend to have access to online spaces such as Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media to promote their work and connect with other activists.[[35]](#footnote-35) However, there are several out-of-school girls and young women whose grassroot or diverse activism may not be easily captured. This could be because by working at a small scale level and purposefully keeping a low profile, may be some of the reasons these groups are not very visible. Also, due to several contextual factors, the girl and young women activists and those from rural contexts may not identify as activists and promote themselves as such.[[36]](#footnote-36)

* + 1. **Asia**[[37]](#footnote-37)

In Plan International’s 2021 Asia Pacific Girls Report, which was largely based on interviews with girl activists, analysis of emerging trends of civic engagement and activism found a mobilisation in both invited and claimed spaces including representation in government-invited spaces for policy consultation. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also invite girl and young women activists into friendly spaces to develop their leadership skills and voice. Girls and young women have actively claimed spaces (such as public demonstrations, campaigns and press releases) for voicing their messages. Online spaces are also being claimed for consciousness-raising and empowerment.

*Approaches, tactics and tools used by girl and young women activists*

While girls and young women often lack the space and resources necessary to make wide-sweeping changes to patriarchal norms and behaviours, in recent years, girl and young woman activists have been able to progressively mobilise gender-transformative movements and engage in collective actions through a range of approaches.

Encouraged by established organisations, many girl and young women activists are leading their own initiatives, ranging from formally registered organisations to unregistered informal groups. These initiatives tend to be horizontal and democratic, and all members are equally valued and consulted. These initiatives maintain safe spaces for girls, women and the LGBTQIA+ community to discuss issues and concerns privately. However, they also recognise the need to include boys and men in the discussion to change gender norms and mitigate gender-based violence. For example, Equal Playing Field runs school programs in Papua New Guinea that use sport to promote respectful relationships and gender equality among both boys and girls.

Some initiatives have adopted the strategy of educating children, their parents and teachers on gender transformative change. While children gain a broader education on gender roles, consent and sexual health, parents and teachers learn how to create a safe space in homes and classrooms for children to enact their rights and seek support from the adults in their lives.

While these initiatives tend to focus on activism for gender transformation and social inclusion within local communities, they also include self-conscientization and transformation within girls and young women themselves. This process involves reflecting on their own gender identity and reviewing their assumptions and beliefs about gender’s role in society. Through self-conscientization, activists can empower themselves through personal growth, build their confidence and nurture their leadership ambitions. The majority of these initiatives have similar goals (i.e., promote social inclusion and encourage gender transformation); however, girl and young women activists are using a range of tactics to raise awareness, mobilise youth and influence public opinion on gender-transformative change. They are also sharing educational material in local languages in order to reach a broad audience and spread their messages more widely. Many initiatives are using in-person advocacy tactics, including presenting a youth manifesto to members of parliament, organising public demonstrations and planning actions around specific days, such as International Women’s Day. Activists are also building evidence through research and fundraising for campaigns to maintain momentum and support these movements.

To keep advocacy messages engaging, many activists are using multimedia, including radio talk shows and local drama theatres, to educate and empower girls and young women with age-appropriate messages.

* + 1. **Americas**

*Youth in resistance*

In Latin America and the Caribbean, youth have led the most powerful social mobilisations in recent years. Their demonstrations are born out of discontent and indignation over inequalities, authoritarianism and impunity. Several movements have been a great inspiration and example of struggle. For example: the critical positioning of youth in Mexico against state corruption, especially with the forced disappearance of students in 2014; the leadership of young people in Nicaragua in 2018 in one of the largest mobilisations of the last decade for a structural change in favour of justice and democracy; and the influence of young feminist women in Argentina on the approval of abortion in 2021, and many more.

Youth in the region are characterized by having a critical and comprehensive thinking of the complexity of their realities. This influences the positioning of their agendas, although some have thematic emphasis, all of them bet on structural changes of inequalities and a comprehensive and intersectional approach to their problems and proposed solutions. This is why youth movements advocate for the management of processes with a broad vision of human rights, rather than a segmented one. This means that although the movements have a central commitment to the prevention and eradication of violence against women, their agendas reflect and position that this is not possible without the rule of law, the functioning of the justice system, an education system that promotes critical thinking, etc.

Instead of referring to issues, it is important to reflect on strategies. Research conducted by Plan International in the Americas on "Disruptive Youth Movements"[[38]](#footnote-38) found that the cross-cutting strategies of social movements are based on training (changes in imaginaries) and the formation of alliances and solidarity networks.

For young people, training and appropriation of human rights is key to advancing a broader understanding of democracy and citizenship, mainly due to the existing gap in the education systems and the patriarchal culture (sexist, ageist, racist) predominant in the region. For youth collectives, it is important that young people take ownership of their rights. All countries in the region have quite progressive youth laws; however, the problem is the implementation gap in terms of budget and political will (especially to recognise children and youth as subjects of rights and actors of civil society).

Building alliances and movements is another key strategy for their sustainability and growth. Here it is important to highlight the strong links that have been created in certain contexts between youth and feminist movements based on a mutual recognition of their strengths and contributions to movement building. There is increasing interest in promoting intergenerational dialogues, some contexts with more challenges than others, but at least with intentions to discuss power and leadership.

"Resistance" is a key concept in youth activism in the region. Youth in the Americas live in resistance to the threats and risks posed by the closing of democratic space in the region. The trend is that youth are increasingly exploring innovative forms of influence, for example, the use of art to raise awareness through theatre, music, performance, muralism.

The performance created by *Las tesis*, a feminist collective of diverse youth in Chile, entitled "*La culpa no era mía*" (“It was not my fault”), is a clear example of creativity, and also of the ability of youth to connect from the national to the regional, and from the face-to-face to the virtual. It was an inspiration for other collectives interested in positioning the normalization of violence in the debate.

*Flexible financing, strategic support*

The forms of youth organisation and participation are diverse. In the region, there are large organised groups that have legal status, and others that do not and do not wish to have it. On the one hand, for unregistered groups, this implies limitations in terms of access to resources. On the other hand, for those who do have legal status, this implies greater control by governments and imposition of agendas if there is an imbalance of power in the cooperant-civil society relationship.

A study on the "Impact of COVID 19 on youth organisations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras"[[39]](#footnote-39), in which a total of 109 organisations participated, showed that 75.2% of the organisations' organisational base is made up of volunteers. This situation associated with the contraction of the economy in the region implied that young people decided between their activism or the search for paid employment.

Youth-led organisations have access to very fluctuating and limited financial resources. Youth call for more strategic partnerships (beyond the logic of projects), for example, the signing of collaboration agreements of 6 months to 1 year that contributes to their strengthening and sustainability, and also considers more resources for their structures and operations (core funding).

1. **Enabling factors and good practices**
   1. **Global**

Worldwide, girls drive change through their engagement in political life and advocacy work. They are leading movements for social and gender equality. As civil society organisations, we have witnessed that effective long-lasting change is driven by initiatives that support girls’ collective action and leadership, enabling them to challenge current governance structures and gender power dynamics. Leadership includes the awareness of being capable of speaking up, despite a challenging environment where girls, when heard, are not taken seriously anyway. It is therefore vital that girls are conscious of their rights to participate, the purpose and benefits of their engagement and know what the ways and the spaces are to advocate for it.

*Foundations for political empowerment*

There has been much attention given to discrimination against women in public life (i.e. CSW65), but very little on how women become equipped, inspired and confident enough to seek public positions, as well as engage in public spaces, processes and decision-making. Plan International’s research found that 76% of girls and young women aged 15 to 25 are motivated to drive social and political change in their homes, communities and beyond.[[40]](#footnote-40) There are many contributing factors during the time of adolescence and early adulthood that create the enabling environment to empower girls and young women to have the confidence and continued motivation to become active in public life.

* **Family and community support networks**: Girls and young women have repeatedly reported how deeply ingrained ideas about gender roles in their communities and societies impact their ability to lead. In South Sudan and India for example, girls reported how ideas around their role in the home can restrict their mobility and ability to engage in social activities and networks[[41]](#footnote-41). Plan International’s Taking the Lead research conducted in 2019 found that girls identified family support as the key component to supporting their aspirations and confidence to become change-makers. Girls in focus group discussions across India, South Sudan, Dominican Republic, Japan and Senegal noted that whilst women leaders faced a general lack of support and criticism from society, it was the lack of support from the family which seemed to be more detrimental to their leadership ambitions. Conversely, support from family from an early age, including encouragement to defy gender stereotypes is one of the essential enablers of leadership.
* **Importance of role models and mentors:** Multiple studies find that girls are more likely to have leadership ambition if they have a role model to look up to and aspire to[[42]](#footnote-42). Mentorship schemes and other ways that connect women who hold leadership positions to younger generations provide a critical intergenerational exchange. Mentorship is a key part of strengthening girls and young women’s motivation to participate and lead in areas such as business and innovation.[[43]](#footnote-43)
* **Civic education and leadership skills development:** Inclusive quality education is one of the most powerful and important tools for achieving gender equality, active civic engagement and promoting girls’ access to power and leadership in adulthood. In supporting all young people’s political empowerment, education must prepare young people to be politically engaged. Gender-transformative education that promotes understanding of gender bias and unpacks gendered social norms from an early age is critical, and should promote the development of critical thinking skills allowing children and young people to analyse and understand political arguments and harmful social norms.[[44]](#footnote-44)
* **Participation and leadership experience:** Exposure to leadership experience is vital to igniting and strengthening children’s and young people’s interest in political and civic action, especially for girls and young women. Participation in the governance of education institutions such as schools is often one of the first opportunities for children to develop and exercise their leadership capacities and learn to engage and negotiate in intergenerational decision-making processes. Educational settings are also often the first place where girls, boys and youth are able to engage with their peers away from home, start critical thinking, organise and form networks, and take part in youth-led collective activities. Participation in decision-making processes at family and school level can help girls to gain such skills and challenge social and gender norms.[[45]](#footnote-45)

As girls increase their exposure to and engagement in collective action, they are empowered to take part in decision making processes at the community, national and international level and push leaders to consider a more inclusive governance approach.

In addition to this, fundamental girls’ rights need to be protected and promoted so that girls are fully enabled to participate in public life, being free from fear and empowered in their developmental journey. This may include, among other things, the access to education, legal protection in case of violence and abuse, childcare support. Creating an enabling environment where girls can raise their voice and engage in public life without restriction or fear of retaliation is key.

*Enablers of successful digital activism*

While girl and young women activists have used a wide range of civic engagement methods, digital technologies and social media have played heavily into the success of this movement. Girl activists are using online social media content, such as stories, memes and short films, to raise awareness on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube on issues affecting them. They are also using WhatsApp and Facebook groups and pages to mobilise youth through ‘social influencers’, recruit volunteers for campaigns, organise petitions and share instructional templates for organising events. Social networking sites have proven effective in expanding networks, building support systems, creating solidarity and spreading the influence needed to sustain social movements. They also act as an electronic repository for instructional resources that can be used in the future.

In some cases, organisations that primarily focus on girl and young women’s activism have used digital technologies to assist in the COVID-19 response.

There are several enablers that support the successful use of digital technologies and social media, including:

* **Adaptability in learning digital technologies:** many girls and young women are savvy with social media and have the awareness and skills needed to protect themselves online. Many of these girl and young women advocates grew up with advanced technologies and are comfortable engaging with older generations through online conversations.
* **Use of interesting content and applications for digital engagement:** social media accounts promoting gender transformation and social inclusion use posters, infographics, narratives, competitions, videos and short films to spread civic engagement messages. Live discussions on Facebook or Instagram are interesting ways to encourage communication about social inclusion.
* **Creation of safe and inclusive spaces to build solidarity:** building solidarity in safe spaces such as social media promotes collective action and strategic gains in the public arena. Social media channels allow individuals to edit their ideas and maintain control of the conversation. Marginalized groups, such as LGBTQIA+ youth, often feel more comfortable discussing their stories and views online where they can protect their identity and avoid the pressures that come with in-person discussions.
* **Connections between offline and online activities:** in many cases of successful digital activism, key actors facilitate these connections and promote in-person relationship-building between youth advocates. New media scholars remain cautious about the potential for sustained social movements existing solely online. Dynamic social media sites require specific knowledge and energy to drive them forward, and digital labour is essential for establishing and maintaining an online presence.
* **Appropriate technologies and improved digital literacy skills:** Organizations and individuals promoting inclusive girls’ and young women’s activism should invest in inclusive and accessible digital technologies. Building the digital literacy of people of all ages, including providing training and guidance on how to use social media effectively for advocacy, enables the involvement of a broader segment of the population in civic engagement and activism.
  + 1. **Supporting collective action**

One of the key enablers of girls’ activism is supporting collective action, and supporting girls’ activism within their organisations is critical:

* Collective activism allows those marginalised with little access to decision-making spaces to be able to amplify their voices in a coordinated way that provides cut through to powerholders.
* It is often a self-care strategy to provide protection to activists from fear, threat or real attacks and reprisals for their work.
* Under the feminist principles that many adopt in self-organising, they also really rely on and value learning and gaining experience from engaging in intergenerational and intersectional movements.
* Because of the lack of access to decision-making spaces, the power of many voices is often needed to cut through and make noise.

Many INGOs and donors continue to under-value movement building as an approach. Instead, many donors focus on youth-led interventions that emphasize individual voices, as they are seen as more impactful. As a result, the girls and young women who become visible and well-resourced are often those looking for individual leadership opportunities rather than ones forming part of social movements.[[46]](#footnote-46)

* + 1. **Enabling measures and policies taken by the UN or States:**

There is increasing attention being given at the international level to girls’ activism, but not without tension:

* The 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2021 focused on “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. However, there was strong resistance to include girls in the discussions, which is indicative of the challenges still surrounding the question of girls’ activism (especially in formal political processes).[[47]](#footnote-47)
* The 2020-2025 Generation Equality process, including the work of the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership. In this context, one priority action on adolescent girls was developed for implementation by all relevant stakeholders over the next 5 years.
* Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 25 on Children’s Rights in the Digital Environment, which includes a focus on using the digital space for civic engagement.
* In March 2019, the UN Human Rights Council adopted [Resolution A/HRC/40/L.22/Rev.1](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/40/L.22/Rev.1) in which it first recognised children as human rights defenders and called upon States to “provide a safe and empowering context for initiatives organised by young people and children to defend human rights relating to the environment”.
* In July 2019, the Human Rights Council adopted [Resolution A/HRC/41/L.6/Rev.1](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/41/L.6/Rev.1) on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. The resolution recognised girl human rights defenders and urged states “to develop, support and protect an enabling environment for the full, meaningful and equal participation of women’s rights organisations, feminist groups and girl and women human rights defenders and youth-led organisations in the creation, design and implementation of all legislation and policies relevant to substantive gender equality”.
* 2018 Day of General Discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Children as Human Rights Defenders.[[48]](#footnote-48) [[49]](#footnote-49)

In the Geneva space, a number of Permanent Missions have been prone to engage girls and young women in the drafting of reports or at least to consult them before making recommendations to other states in human rights mechanisms processes, namely UPR. Even though these are best practices to implement, they are still very sporadic cases.

All of this being said, the themes of girls’ (and children’s) activism, participation and collective action have been contentious issues within intergovernmental bodies such as the Human Rights Council, General Assembly and Commission on the Status of Women. Some conservative Member States contend that girls, given their age, are unequipped to participate “fully, meaningfully and effectively in decision-making”[[50]](#footnote-50), lacking the information or maturity to do so. Underlying these arguments are beliefs that promoting children’s right to participate undermines the family unit, parental authority or “parents’ rights”. Regressive gender norms are equally at play, who say that girls in particular should not be too outspoken. A report on this topic from the Working Group will have authoritative weight, and may prove to be a useful tool in efforts to change Member States’ mind-sets on the issue.

* + 1. **Good practices**

|  |
| --- |
| **Italian youth-led programme, called “Scuola Prime Minister”, a free school of politics for girls in several cities in Italy[[51]](#footnote-51)**  Offering adolescents the opportunity to reflect and take action on active citizenship guarantees freedom of expression and sets them on a journey of growth and empowerment. This is the objective of the Scuola Prime Minister, set up two years ago in Favara, Sicily, which to date has worked with more than 500 teenagers and has opened other schools in Naples, Rome, Rieti, Puglia and Basilicata. “We think that the lack of female participation in civic engagement and politics is deeply unjust, as well as the more general presence of stereotypes that limit the potential and freedom of choice of young women”, explains Denise Di Dio, founder of the initiative alongside Eva Vittoria Cammerino, Angela Laurenza and Florinda Saieva. As is the case in many other countries, women are under-represented in Italian politics and consequentially their views are under-heard. The idea at the heart of Scuola Prime Minister is that more women are needed to bridge the gender gap. “This is a medium to long term investment to increase the number of women who are ready and able to intervene in public matters, through civic associations, political parties or their chosen profession”, Denise Di Dio explains. “At the same time, it is a far more immediate investment to immediately change the way in which young women perceive themselves, their potential, the stereotypes that they have to overcome in order to make decisions about their future, and the role that they can have in their community, starting from schools and the neighbourhoods they live in”.  Mariachiara Galante, 18 years of age, who is enrolled on the course at Scuola Prime Minister, says she would like to become a strong woman, a successful woman, a woman who is proud of herself and who is well rounded. A woman who doesn’t let anyone walk over her. “Since I was young, I have noticed the differences in behaviours between us girls and boys. Certain behaviours and things that weren’t right, which my female classmates instead hadn’t ever noticed. I want to make a change towards gender equality, and I want to do it where I live, here in Basilicata, but I hope that my contribution can make a change on a regional or national level”. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Case study: School of Political Empowerment**  In Latin America, Plan International has partnered with a regional indigenous women’s rights organisation (Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indigenas de las Americas - ECMIA) to establish Schools of Political Empowerment and Leadership for Adolescent Girls and Young Indigenous Women across nine countries. The programme uses a co-curricular program called Champions of Change to discuss with indigenous girls and young women in particular, issues of gender equality, indigenous rights and civic engagement and activism. The program aims to build political engagement skills and supports indigenous adolescent girls and young women in their activism and political engagement. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Case study: Girl-led group in Cameroon promotes girls’ health in the COVID-19 response, funded by the Global Resilience Fund** Adolescent Initiative for Reform (AIR) is a girl-led group (14–19 years old) in Cameroon which runs a peer education program in schools, focused on menstrual hygiene and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Furthermore, they seek to strengthen the capacity of girls to influence SRHR and HIV/AIDS laws and policies. Once schools were closed due to COVID-19 the group decided to facilitate access to information on SRHR through the use of radio, posters and social media campaigns. In addition, they sought to provide ‘dignity kits’ to internally displaced girls – each kit will have COVID-19 prevention materials as well as menstrual kits. The group has changed its strategies from in-person to online peer education through various platforms to ensure that girls in their community access the content they are sharing. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Case study: Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA)**  The [Girls Advocacy Alliance](https://www.girlsadvocacyalliance.org/about/) (GAA),[[52]](#footnote-52)[1] was a joint civil society initiative from 2016-2020 led by Plan International, Terre des Hommes and Defence for Children International. The GAA promoted the rights of girls and young women by empowering and supporting young advocates to engage with the Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and other accountability mechanisms on issues related to GBV and economic exclusion. A video introducing the GAA can be viewed [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAOrZ_HWzjs).  The GAA supported youth advocates to deliver their advocacy messages at local, national, regional, and international levels, and provided information and capacity building to girls and young women who are rights advocates. They held dialogues in their countries with political, religious, and traditional leaders on issues that affect them, including economic exclusion, teenage pregnancies, commercial exploitation, and child marriage. They engaged at the international level by submitting NGO reports or making oral statements to bodies such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF).  Using the GAA toolkit and resources, youth advocates developed a joint advocacy strategy targeting the relevant power-holders and identifying the most effective ways to deliver their messages. They organise activities to promote their rights and influence decision-makers to implement the 2030 Agenda. They deliver media messages and meet with people in their community to raise awareness. The GAA strives to ensure that participation is meaningful, safe, and impactful. We carry out our activities in line with child protection and safeguarding requirements.  In 2019, a group of 23 youth advocates participated in the GAA Global Youth Meet-Up. They represented broader constituencies of youth in marginalized communities from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. They spent a week in the Netherlands linking up with fellow youth advocates, exchanging capacity, building their skills, and developing joint strategies to advocate against gender-based violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women.  GAA Youth Advocates also intervened at key events including the Level Up for Girls event with Dutch Parliamentarians, the Day of General Discussion of the CRC, and the HLPF. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Girls Out Loud:**  Girls Out Loud is an innovation project implemented by Plan International providing private online spaces for girls to freely and safely discuss the issues they care about. The girls have access to private, moderated Facebook and Instagram groups. The project is currently in five countries and will soon be scaled up and expanded to others. |

* 1. **Regional spotlights**
     1. **Africa**

Cognizant of the importance of economic empowerment in girls and young women activism, for example gaining financial independence, and improving their future prospects for participation in the labour force, Zimbabwe has already put in place a Broad-Based Women’s Economic Empowerment Framework. This Framework’s strategic interventions include enhancing women’s business ownership, entrepreneurship and facilitating women’s participation in key economic decision-making positions. It also promotes employment equity and commits to assisting women from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate and benefit from viable informal and formal livelihood activities.[[53]](#footnote-53)

*Training girls and young women in leadership in Uganda:* The Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) is a women’s organisation offering a platform for women to learn, network, share experiences and advocate for gender equality and equality in decision-making processes at various political levels in the country. FOWODE organises leadership camps to equip girls and young women with analytic and practical leadership skills to express their priorities in the communities and generate ideas for collective action. Technical skills training is combined with training on African feminism, transformational leadership, gender, culture and sexuality, gender and governance, and conflict and its impact on women. This combination is considered essential in creating leaders who are self-aware, identify emotionally and intellectually with their community and are able to advance the goal of a just and fair society.[[54]](#footnote-54)

* + 1. **Asia[[55]](#footnote-55)**

*Development of local or national policies*

The successful civic engagement efforts of girl and young women activists are essential for promoting gender transformative change and equality. One of the enabling factors in supporting civic engagement is the development of local or national policies to provide girl and young women advocates with the protection they need to voice their opinions and share their experiences; a lack of specific policies to protect girl and young women advocates can have detrimental effects on the overall civic engagement movement.

A young woman activist from Bangladesh cited a lack of protection for youth and girls’ and women’s civic engagement within the country. Girls and young women are motivated to spread awareness and promote gender equality, but many of them do not trust police forces to protect them and address their concerns, making it difficult to safely spread their messages. Conversely, in Indonesia, despite the lack of a specific policy, the Government is working to support girl and young women activists. A local activist has stated that the Government supports youth advocacy activities and even invited members of YCG to join activities on gender equality through civil society organisation (CSO) and NGO networks.

The development of specific policies to support girl and young women civic engagement will provide activists with the protection they need to voice their opinions and spread their messages of gender equality.

* + 1. **Americas**

Enabling factors for girls’ and young women’s activism include:

* **Recognition of youth as agents of change and civil society actors, not beneficiaries:** In recent years, Plan International has evolved in its work with youth. The recognition of youth organisations as partners has implied a different working model because the relationship is based on respect for organisational autonomy, mutual valuation of capacities, shared decision-making, collective risk analysis, definition of roles and responsibilities.
* **Strategic collaboration (beyond financial):** Organizations require financing, but also non-financial support. For example, for Plan International in the Americas, a good practice has been to enhance the organisation’s roles as articulators and facilitators of processes (for visibility and capacity building). Plan International's partner organisations in Bolivia, for example, confirm how valuable the connections promoted by Plan international between the collectives and other international actors in the country have been.

*Good practices*

* **Development of processes with a focus on strengthening civil society:** Youth live in constant threat and risk due to their critical position towards power. For this reason, context analysis and civic space are increasingly becoming key strategies for strategic (and not reactive) planning. Program management that focuses on strategic collaboration with other actors, strengthening legitimacy and diversity, as well as influencing an enabling environment for civil society has been key to ensure the success, but also the protection and security of activists and organisations. Experiences from Guatemala show how strategic and important it is to facilitate collective sessions between international organisations, youth collectives and external specialists to understand the implications of reforms to NGO regulation laws and from this, define action plans that allow for good internal organisation and preparation.
* **Building solidarity networks:** Networking has been strategic to push for a more enabling environment for civil society, but also to resist. This has also been key to mutual learning, exchange of experiences and learning.
* **Core-funding and flexible funding mechanisms:** Plan International is launching pilot initiatives in several countries to leverage flexible lines of funding to respond to civic space challenges (civic space flex fund). This type of initiative also strengthens a logic of partnerships or alliances where there is a shared analysis and management of risks.

1. **Challenges and structural barriers**
   1. **Global**

*Social norms*

Social norms present a barrier to participation from a young age, dictating at the family and community levels what decisions are appropriate for girls and boys to participate in. These dynamics are often highly gendered, often particularly discriminating against girls and young women[[56]](#footnote-56). From an early age, girls are often discouraged from speaking their minds and engaging outside the domestic sphere, which are considered generally a “male domain”. These reduce girls’ and young women’s confidence and limit their potential[[57]](#footnote-57). Prevailing social norms and cultural attitudes reduce girls’ and young women’s mobility, freedom, access to resources and information, their ability to develop broad social networks and limit their confidence.

Because of their age, children and young people are not always allowed to exercise freedom of expression and opinion at home, school or in the community. Adults often do not believe it is appropriate or beneficial for them or for the children involved to share information or power with them, whether in family or formal “politics”.[[58]](#footnote-58) Across cultures and throughout history, politics has been the exclusive domain of privilege and power for older, male and often wealthy citizens, systematically excluding and marginalising other social groups –predominantly young people and women –from political discourse, debates and decision-making. As a result, the diverse needs and interests of numerous social groups have been historically –and hugely –underrepresented.[[59]](#footnote-59)

They are also a barrier to the family support that girls and young women need to encourage their political ambitions. Such harmful gender norms increase girls’ lack of time as they maintain expectations that girls and young women will assume high levels of domestic responsibilities. Gender norms further deprive them of access to the financial resources[[60]](#footnote-60) needed to pay for transport to meetings or membership fees to associations for their civic and political action.

*Civic space for girls*

Globally, we are witnessing the worrying trend of shrinking civic space as a threat to activism. Measures taken by governments to repress civil society space often cite young people as a threat, because of, for example, their ability to mobilise large crowds in protests. Youth and child-led civil society groups, activists and human rights defenders, routinely at the forefront of rights-based movements, remain particularly susceptible to these unlawful restrictions and persecutions.

The shrinking of civic spaces presents unique challenges to girls and young women and understanding these specific civic space implications and related risks is essential in order to better support children and youth in claiming their civic spaces and finding appropriate avenues for self-expression and activism. For example, not all youth, girls’ and women’s human rights defenders openly refer to themselves as such. Young people are increasingly discerning in navigating their social, cultural and political environments to advance their agendas. According to consultations conducted by Plan International, in some countries young people described how they could not even call themselves “youth leaders” as this was seen as threatening to local legislators. In another, young people identified as human rights defenders in private, but chose the less controversial term “girls’ rights advocate” externally. Consequently, this makes monitoring the situation of human rights defenders, particularly youth and girls’ human rights defenders, much more difficult. Groups who are doing the work of human rights defenders but don’t necessarily call themselves as such still need to be recognised.

In a study commissioned by Plan International entitled “Civic Space Implications for Children and Young People within the Generation Change! Programme”, respondents recognised that the government has the ultimate say in which organisations and activists operate and the overall success of their work. Some activists feared being penalized by the government and also being at the mercy of the government or political actors in their work. Most try to maintain a harmonious relationship with the government and abide within the laws, but that outcome is not always positive. As one respondent in the study said, “society calls girl activists un-African, for daring to challenge oppression towards them.” Study respondents also shared that the police and military are seen as the actors that pose the biggest threat and risk. In some contexts, this can take the form of repressing activists’ rights to free association by means of brutality when they are protesting on the streets, and even imprisonment. Finally respondents also reported persecution by other individuals in the form of destruction of property, incitement to hate, beatings, arson, or vandalism.

Some of the common ways in which girls and young women find their activities restricted include:

* Sexual harassment: The most common offline and online risk faced by children and youth activists, especially for girls and young women, is sexual harassment.
* Pressure from governments and/or political actors:Some young activists fear being penalized by the government and also being at the mercy of the government or political actors in their work.
* Persecution by law enforcement agencies: In some contexts, this can take the form of repressing activists’ rights to free association by means of brutality when they are protesting on the streets, and even imprisonment.
* Persecution by other individuals: Persecution can take the form of destruction of property, incitement to hate, beatings, arson, or vandalism.
* Intentional restriction of social and economic activity: Another risk identified by activists and their organisations is freezing of funds and other financial assets and economic resources including preventing their use, alteration, movement, transfer, or access.

*Resourcing*

Girl- and young women activists constantly tell us[[61]](#footnote-61) about their need for financial and technical support to navigate adult-centric funding processes.[[62]](#footnote-62) This will likely only become greater due to COVID-19. Only 1% of gender-focused international aid reaches women’s organisations. This 1% is not disaggregated by age but we can assume the proportion going to girl-led groups is miniscule[[63]](#footnote-63). This sizable funding gaps and supply-side barriers mean that girls and young women-led organisations are faced with top-down, insufficient and restrictive funding mechanisms.

Legal and administrative obstacles can prevent girls and young women from accessing funding[[64]](#footnote-64). These include:

* Registration challenges: they are not officially registered (too young to register or do not want to);
* Compliance requirements, reporting mechanisms and application processes are onerous, time consuming and too technical;
* Limited organisational capacity of girl- and young women-led organisations and lack of financial and administrative infrastructure;
* They are young/under 18 and cannot open bank accounts, having no means to receive money;
* Funding often goes to older groups;
* Young feminist organisations and movements may not fall under the category of “women’s rights organisations” imposed by donors to access funds destines towards work on advancing gender equality;
* Funding flows are too rigid, and do not take into account the fluid and intersectional approach of many young feminist organisations;[[65]](#footnote-65)
* Lack of technical capacities for accessing funding, developing proposals, implementing and monitoring and evaluating them.

Increased and earmarked funding that directly contributes towards the work of grassroots organisations is also critical to strengthening girl-and young women-led organisations around the world. There is a notable absence of funding available for youth movements from multilateral or bilateral agencies and governments[[66]](#footnote-66). Instead, income sources tend to come from self-generated activities including membership fees. This, in itself, could act as an exclusionary barrier to some individuals who do not have the financial means to participate. There can be funding available from women’s funds, INGOs and foundations, but also with bureaucratic challenges[[67]](#footnote-67). Dedicated funding streams are needed for youth-led organisations working on human rights issues that values collaboration, not competition amongst grassroots groups and associations. Offering the opportunity to co-apply for shared grants is one way to do this. As youth groups and activists respond quickly to emerging rights issues, their agendas evolve as needed. It requires flexible funding and fast reaction from donors. Youth groups and associations also need flexible funding for technical equipment and organisational strengthening based on the needs they defined. Training on project management, financial management and general capacity is identified as a key area of support by youth activists.

*Lack of formal routes to girls’ participation*

Although young people are drivers of change and engaged in socio-political movements, formal politics is still largely a domain of people over the age of 35, with youth remaining underrepresented. Girls are best positioned to speak about their own realities, and it is critical that girls be meaningfully involved in decisions, laws and policies that affect them. Governments should work to ensure formal mechanisms and institutions provide girls under 18 with the opportunity to engage in a way that is age- and gender-responsive. The report could examine good practices in providing spaces for girls to engage in formal political processes, in a way that goes beyond tokenistic consultation but allows for girls to actively drive political agendas.

*Violence, harassment and reprisals against girl activists, including online*

Violence and harassment faced by girls and young women remains rife.[[68]](#footnote-68) Violence and harassment are being used, both incidentally and strategically, to silence the voices of girls and women, and to limit their engagement in political debates, including online, and infringe on their freedom of expression and opinion. While many young people struggle with the pressures of social media, compared to their male peers, girls online are facing more threats of sexual violence, more comments about their appearance and behaviour, and are more often told not to speak out and have an opinion.

Whilst online platforms have statistics and reporting ability for certain issues such as terrorism, they do not produce statistics analysing gender-based violence (GBV) on their platforms. However, a 2020 global survey of young people’s experience of online abuse and harassment was conducted by The World Wide Web Foundation and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. The survey found that 52% of young women and girls have experienced online abuse, including threatening messages, sexual harassment and the sharing of private images without consent.[[69]](#footnote-69) Amnesty International conducted qualitative and quantitative research about women’s experiences on social media platforms including the scale, nature and impact of violence and abuse directed towards women on Twitter, with a particular focus on the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The study demonstrated that the nature of the abuse included direct or indirect threats of physical or sexual violence, discriminatory abuse targeting one or more aspects of a woman’s identity, targeted harassment, and privacy violations such as doxing[[70]](#footnote-70) or sharing sexual or intimate images of a woman without her consent.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online[[72]](#footnote-72) and almost three quarters of women have experienced some form of online violence.[[73]](#footnote-73) These forms of violence often disproportionately impact girls and young women at the intersections of other forms of marginalisation. This includes girls and young women who are members of minority races and ethnicities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and/or living with disabilities.[[74]](#footnote-74)

As a result, girls and women self-censor and withdraw from online spaces, preventing them from assembling and becoming effective drivers of social and political change. Plan International’s 2020 “Free to be online?” research showed that 47% of interview respondents reported being attacked for their opinions.[[75]](#footnote-75) They felt that often the aim of the attack was to diminish their credibility and knowledge of an issue or to try and silence them altogether – girls shouldn’t speak about certain topics. Several girls reported that posting about gender or feminist issues attracted comments, with one saying that they came from lots of different people – both men and women. Additionally, one in five (19%) girls have left or significantly reduced use of a social media platform after being harassed, while another one in ten (12%) have changed the way they express themselves.[[76]](#footnote-76) One in four girls feels less confident to share their views and one in five has stopped engaging in politics or current affairs as a result of misinformation/disinformation online.[[77]](#footnote-77)

In some places, girls are at risk by simply being on social media. There may be taboos around girls’ use or visibility on these platforms, and that is highlighted by the fact that many girls and young women are forced to navigate through these online spaces by creating fake accounts that do not display or reflect any identifiable personal features or information (fake name, profile picture, etc.). And the fear of reprisals felt by girls if discovered is real. For example, in Jordan in 2020, a 14-year-old girl was killed by her brother because she chose to open a Facebook account.[[78]](#footnote-78)

* **Cyberbullying:**  Youth activists consider cyberbullying to be the most common online risk that they are currently facing and takes place on social media, messaging platforms, and mobile phones. It is repeated and wilful behaviour aimed at scaring, angering, or shaming those who are targeted.
* **Threats on social media:** Youth activists, especially girls, young women and LGBTQIA+ activists, also face threats on social media. Activists are reporting, informing, and denouncing action on social media and, as a consequence, they are attacked by third parties that are against their works and values. There have been incidents, for example, in which pro-abortion and LGBTQIA+ activists have received death threats through social media.
* **Reputational damage:** Youth activists also face reputational risks through adversaries spreading rumors or making false statements that expose activists to hatred, ridicule or contempt, and general defamation. Fake profiles are also created to attack their work. For girls and young women working on sexual reproductive health and rights, this is a common online risk. This has a detrimental impact on the girls and, as a consequence, their parents and families often prohibit them to continue their work and activities in order to avoid this reputational damage.

*Mis- and disinformation online*

Globally, we’re living through immense digital change. Although disinformation and misinformation are not a new phenomenon, the rapid spread of false information online is an issue of our times. It affects all of us. But for girls, the impact is devastating. Every day, girls and young women online are bombarded with lies and stereotypes about their bodies, who they are and how they should behave. Images and videos are manipulated to objectify and shame them. Rumours are spread to undermine their voices and their leadership. And girls have a very real fear that fake events and profiles will lure and trick them into danger offline. In their new study called “The Truth Gap”[[79]](#footnote-79), Plan International spoke to 26,000 girls and young women across 26 countries about their exposure to false information online. The statistics coming out of that study are concerning: Nine in ten reported that it has negatively impacted their lives. Girls see women leaders targeted with malicious rumours and conspiracy theories designed to attack their credibility and shame them into silence. This damages girls’ leadership ambitions. One in four (26%) feels less confident to share their views. One in five (18%) stopped engaging in politics or current affairs. And for one in five (19%) it’s knocked their trust in election results. It is corrosive, undermining girls’ and young women’s confidence to take part in public life.

False information can have serious consequences for democracy and human rights. For citizens to engage effectively in public debate, make informed decisions around political representation, and be able to hold their leaders to account, they need to be able to access reliable information. Yet misinformation and disinformation endanger this. CIVICUS has highlighted in their most recent State of Civil Society report that over the past 10 years, whilst the explosion of social media has created new opportunities for civic action, disinformation has emerged as a crucial threat[[80]](#footnote-80). Social media platforms have provided fertile ground for disinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories – all stoked by states and political groups to create hostility, societal fractures, attack civil society and further discriminate against already excluded and marginalised groups[[81]](#footnote-81). The World Economic Forum, too, noted the suppression and manipulation of information as a global risk in 2021[[82]](#footnote-82) with the number of countries experiencing organised social media manipulation campaigns having increased by 150% between 2017 and 2019[[83]](#footnote-83).

*Marginalisation within civil society*

In challenging, sometimes hostile political environments, girls and young women-led groups need support from other civil society organisations (CSOs). However, CSOs are generally adult-led with structures and agendas not responsive to girls’ and young women’s voices and needs, particularly the most marginalized. Even child-rights and women’s rights movements are often blind to the specific needs/realities of girls. CSOs’ siloed way of working undermines effective advocacy for gender equality and girls’ civil and political rights[[84]](#footnote-84). The gender barrier has gained significant international attention, but it is not accompanied with a strong emphasis on the intersection with age, hence leaving girls and young women behind.

Girl-led associations are often not part of or connected to the mainstream women’s rights movement, and given the difficulty of girls in many regions to access the internet (see below, Regional Spotlight: Africa), girls can miss out on the organising, networking and funding opportunities found online.

Here we see the double discrimination experienced by girls as they are pushed to the margins of both the women’s rights and children’s rights movements.

*Tokenism*

Participation in the public sphere, to be real, should be accompanied with decision-making power, which is not normally the case for girls and young women. Risk of ‘tokenism’ is to be highlighted when girls and young women are brought to spaces, but their inputs do not convert into actions by decision-makers. It is essential, and thus an intentional focus should be applied, that young women are granted with decision-making roles, both in law making and in law enforcement. Specific representative spaces/bodies in which girls and young women have a seat is an urgent need to advocate for.

*Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*

Although girls’ and young women’s civic action and leadership in social change is on the rise overall, it is far from equitable within and across contexts. Globally, poor, uneducated girls and young women, rural girls and young women, girls and young women in humanitarian crisis contexts, migrant, displaced and refugee girls and young women, are less engaged in political action, whether formal or informal, than their more privileged counterparts[[85]](#footnote-85). For example:

* In contexts where the rights of indigenous groups aren’t recognised, it can make it nearly impossible for those groups to access information and participate to public life.
* Young activists who identify as LGBTQIA+ or who chose to take collective action around LGBTQIA+ issues, are particularly vulnerable to hostile reactions and violence. In contexts where identifying as LGBTQIA+ is illegal, resources for their work, including funding, tend to be scarce and these organisations will likely be excluded from decision-making spaces all together and may even be formally persecuted.
* A recent report found that “women and girls with disabilities have historically encountered many barriers to participation in public decision-making, due to power imbalances and multiple forms of discrimination, they have had fewer opportunities to establish or join organisations that can represent their needs as women and persons with disabilities”.[[86]](#footnote-86)
* Language differences may also prove a formidable barrier, for example, when trying to organise migrants from different linguistic backgrounds into a common association. Migrant women may particularly struggle with a lack of knowledge and information about existing opportunities to organise, or about the political system and institutions of the destination country.[[87]](#footnote-87)

All marginalised and minority groups risk hostile reaction and backlash for speaking out, especially if such identities are more visible.

* 1. **Regional spotlights**
     1. **Africa**

Many girls and young women face threats and several have experienced physical violence. Some have informal mechanisms for dealing with these, but many do not, and most are working in contexts with very limited or non-existent structures and services to support them to stay safe. Amongst the skills and learning that girl and young women activists seek from their peers and from adult activists and INGOs, is how to stay safe in their work. They struggle to identify and access flexible funding opportunities and lack the know-how to navigate complex application processes.

Quoting a girl living with disability in Malawi, ‘*There are so many issues affecting girls of my age in**Malawi and they are worse when you are disabled. Those who are disabled have always been taken as second-class citizens – in terms of access to education they are always left behind. If you look at the structures that are in schools, they are not user-friendly. It is extremely hard for somebody who is using crutches or a wheelchair to attend class.*’[[88]](#footnote-88)

Some of the key challenges for girl and young women activists in the region include:

* **Limited economic empowerment opportunities:** girls and young women are among the most economically vulnerable groups, as these typically lack access to financial capital and have more limited opportunities to gain the education, knowledge, and skills that can lead to economic advancement. It is now widely accepted that girls and young women are a powerful economic force. Economic empowerment is a critical lever for change in adolescent girls’ and young women’s lives, helping them to gain financial independence, establish good saving habits, and improve their future prospects for participation in the labour force. It can also provide girls and young women with more mobility, promote their confidence, strengthen their social networks, and improve their health outcomes. In addition, promoting women’s economic empowerment facilitates the achievement of other important public policy goals such as economic growth, improved human development, and reduced violence.[[89]](#footnote-89)
* **Cultural norms and expectations:** Some of the underlying causes of many of the challenges facing girls and young women are the negative cultural norms and expectations that permeate many aspects of their lives. They shape who they should be and how they should live, including their school attendance, workload, marriage, voice in the household, autonomy and overall well-being.[[90]](#footnote-90)
* **Low educational attainment:** Whereas primary school education is almost universal, attendance at secondary school and tertiary levels continue to be low among girls and young women, especially in rural areas. To rural girls and young women, the significance of progressing into secondary education would not only be in terms of improving literacy levels, but also in shaping attitudes and behaviour towards family size, stronger voice in decision making and challenging negative cultural practices.[[91]](#footnote-91)
* **Intimidation:** Girls and young women activists often feel undervalued by adults in the activist and development spheres. Some often feel undermined based on their age and experience. In addition, adult activists sometimes act as a barrier to girls’ and young women’s involvement. Girls and young women activists have experienced tokenism and power imbalance while working with adult activists.
* **Wellbeing and risk of burnout:** Girls and young women activists are often busy and overstretched hence they do not practice self-care and well-being. Therefore, the risk of burnout is apparent.
* **Frequent abuse, bullying and harassment:** The abuse and harassment that girls and young women face for standing up for their rights is well documented. This includes backlash, online abuse, threats and risks for their physical safety.
* **Planning for the future and maintaining involvement in activism over time is a challenge:** One of the concerns that girl and young women activists expressed was around how they might balance activism with other commitments and life changes in the future. This is also something former or older activists discussed and is referenced in other studies - activists can often struggle to balance family life with their work, and in some cases, marriage can act as a barrier to activism.
* **Intergenerational collaboration:** Organisations working with activists and girl-led groups expressed a parallel concern. As activists get older, and organisations seek to fund adolescent girls, what role exists for older activists? What is the best way to maintain their involvement while also maintaining space for younger activists?
* **Girls and young women activists want flexible funding, but not just funding:** Funding is a major challenge for girl and young women activists and groups. This is documented in the literature on girls' activism. Many of the conversations about the different kinds of support girl and young women activists were interested in and looking for came back to resources and money. Girls and young women activists and their groups find it difficult to access funding for a range of reasons. Some identified the formal documentation and other requirements to apply for funding as too demanding and strict for their groups. The fact that very few girls’ and young women’s groups are formally registered is a barrier for them even applying for funding. This is recognised by some INGOs and reflects conversations with organisations seeking to fund girls’ groups by ensuring the application criteria is friendly to girls and young women.
  + 1. **Asia[[92]](#footnote-92)**

National governments in the Asia-Pacific region have had mixed responses to the rise in youth activism. Both the Asia and Pacific regions, as well as the individual countries within those regions, have taken various actions to either support or hinder girls’ young women’s civic engagement. While some Asian governments have supported civic engagement efforts, others have begun limiting youth activism by penalizing protestors and dissenters. Authoritarian tactics have emerged that restrict human rights advocacy efforts, including security force repression, censorship, arrests and surveillance.

There has also been legislation passed under the guise of anti-terrorism policies that restricts activists’ freedoms and strengthens the power of the state. Such legislation includes ‘fake news’ laws and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 in the Philippines, which allows the state to detain suspects without charge for up to 24 days.[[93]](#footnote-93) In response, girl and young women advocates have called for more dialogues between gender activists and the Government, as well as increased support from law enforcement agencies to protect girl and young women activists.

Additionally, it remains difficult for governments to address socially controversial and religious issues, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

While governments’ responses in the Pacific region have been largely positive, certain governments are censoring media and public debate, limiting girls’ and young women’s opportunities to influence the political agenda for gender equality. For example, governments in Fiji are attempting to regulate and control social media, censor traditional media and implement digital surveillance by national security forces. Sector-based experts warn that governments should not try to control girls and young women; rather, they should provide support, ensure justice and allow young activists to express different values and political views.

* + 1. **Americas**

*Closure of civic space, regulatory frameworks and criminalization of social activism*

One of the greatest challenges in the region has been the gap in compliance with approved regulatory frameworks, especially in the recognition of the rights of children and youth. However, one of the greatest setbacks is in the approval of regulations that control and restrict the operation of NGOs. For example, the Government of Nicaragua has approved regulations to control and penalize (even with imprisonment) online activism and social movements; the reforms to the NGO Law in Guatemala with greater bureaucracy, increasing the details and frequency of technical and financial reports.

Criminalization involves campaigns that discredit or delegitimize the role and contributions of civil society organisations. This is evident in contexts such as El Salvador where the government discredits civil society for its active role in denouncing corruption and inequalities.

This situation with governments in Latin America influences girls and young women to have a high level of distrust of state institutions because instead of playing a role as guarantors and protectors of human rights, they become perpetuators of violence and discrimination.

*Religious fundamentalisms*

Religious fundamentalisms have a strong impact on social norms, but also on public policies. Here it is key to point out the influence of conservative groups, such as "We are many, we are more" in Paraguay, which succeeded in their lobbying strategies so that all schools would prohibit materials with a "gender ideology" approach through a resolution of the Ministry of Education and Science. With this resolution, schools are prohibited from talking about sexual rights and reproductive rights.

*Political instability*

Political instability influences a greater closure of civic space for civil society and a greater capacity of influence of religious fundamentalist groups.

The resignation of the President of Guatemala in 2015 after massive citizen protests, the civic insurrection in Nicaragua in 2018 and the escalation of state repression, the failed elections in Bolivia in 2019, the National Citizens' Strike in Colombia in 2021, the assassination of the President of Haiti in 2021, and the investigations of Presidents and several public officials for corruption and links to drug trafficking, as in the case of Honduras, are examples of the upheaval in the region.

In the midst of this situation, young people are at the forefront demanding justice and democracy. This influences governments and their affinity groups to exert more pressure to silence their voices and stop their mobilisations.

*Patriarchal imaginaries and practices*

In the different research conducted on the perception and experiences of children and youth regarding the fulfilment of their rights and recognition as activists and human rights organisations, it is confirmed that in the face of governments, and even the civil society sector itself, social imaginaries prevail in which they are discriminated against for "lack of experience". Their participation and leadership is finally co-opted because they are used as "beneficiaries" and not as political agents.

It is important to highlight that these challenges, as already mentioned, are found externally, but also internally. Civil society organisations are sometimes a reflection of the sexist, racist and sycophantic culture prevailing in the countries. This makes it extremely difficult for girls' and young women's leadership to be finally recognised and respected within their own organisations. This comes from experiences of youth in Guatemala who develop their work in rural and indigenous areas, and even youth representing LGBTQIA+ people, such as organisations in Bolivia, who are excluded from decision-making and/or civil society coordination spaces.

*Approaches and requirements of international cooperation*

International cooperation insists on fragmenting the agendas of civil society, and also imposes certain requirements for organisations led by children and youth to have access to funding. On this last point, it is important to highlight two variables. First, the obligation of legal registration, which limits access to funds and also questions the autonomy of organisations that do not wish to register. Second, "umbrella" work, i.e. support to organisations led by children and youth through "larger" organisations, although this has been effective in several cases, in others it has been shown that in this type of collaboration there are unequal power relations because one of the organisations imposes the logic of work, resource management and even the issues on which to work.

This calls for international cooperation to seek mechanisms to provide financial and non-financial resources directly to children and youth while respecting their organisational autonomy.

1. **Emerging issues**
   1. **Global**

*COVID-19*

The data collected in the “Global Gender Gap Index” shows that the COVID-19 has amplified pre-existing gender gaps and raised new barriers to building inclusive and prosperous economies and societies [[94]](#footnote-94). Furthermore, the pandemic has had a great impact on the exclusion of girls and young women from labour, school and high-quality training. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, it was estimated that reaching gender equality would have taken 99 years. Instead, today we know that it will take at least 135 years to fill in this Gender Gap[[95]](#footnote-95).

As matter of fact, the pandemic has caused not only a worldwide health emergency, but also an unprecedented global economic crisis driven by the established measures to stop the spread of the virus, such as social distancing, quarantine, and lockdowns. Some States have utilized lockdowns to suppress citizen protest movements, and conversely, new movements and new forms of protest have emerged from the pandemic. In a myriad of ways, this pandemic is shaping the way girls and young women protest. Some repressive regimes also interrupted the internet or restrained access to social media. There is also a risk that special laws approved will be used to impose further restrictions on the medium and long term.

*Peaceful protests*

States should respect the rights of girls and young women to organise and advocate freely and safely within their communities, schools, and public spaces – both on- and offline. Those participating in peaceful protests, including girl human rights defenders, should enjoy at least the same level of protection against threats, intimidation, and violence as their adult counterparts. However, when protests turn violent, girls and young women often face intimidation, sexual harassment, GBV, and threats to their physical safety resulting from the use of lethal weapons.

*Digital activism*

Use of digital media has transformed because of the pandemic. The Global Index Insights show that Generation Z (16–24-year-olds) consuming more media than older generations, with some notable differences by age, mostly online videos like YouTube and TikTok, making it their top media to consume right now[[96]](#footnote-96). Which according to JP Morgan is a permanent shift that has taken place across the industry from a linear platform to a digital platform[[97]](#footnote-97). This can be seen in the increase in subscription and consumption of social media platforms for instance Facebook’s total use across its messaging services has increased by more than 50% in areas most affected by the virus[[98]](#footnote-98).

*Digital divide*

Despite this global increasing use of media, the gender gap in mobile internet use in low- and middle-income countries remains substantial, with over 300 million fewer women/girls than men accessing the internet on a mobile[[99]](#footnote-99). In fact, access remains a problem in many countries[[100]](#footnote-100). Ensuring connectivity and addressing supply-side issues (infrastructure, access to IT devices, teacher capacities and educational content) [facilitates remote learning](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IRB%202020-10%20CL.pdf), but at a time when school closures have made remote learning a critical part of many children’s lives, these steps alone are not enough. COVID-19 has laid bare and exacerbated existing inequalities among girls as many are unable to access online classes as a result of lack of access to devices and the internet. In many countries classes have moved online, which is far less accessible to girls than to boys. Research conducted by UNICEF on a sample of middle- and low-income countries highlights how disadvantaged girls are in comparison to their male peers in the acquisition of Information Technology (IT) skills, both at home and at school: in Ghana, 16% of boys aged between 15 and 18 have gained IT skills, as opposed to the 7% of girls in the same age group[[101]](#footnote-101). Owning a Personal Computer (PC) at home facilitates the acquisition of IT skills. “But the presence of a computer at home does not nullify the gender divide - emphasizes UNICEF - In more than half of the analysed countries, teenage boys use the PC and access the internet more frequently than girls do. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, 46% of teenage boys use their home PC at least once a week against 24% of girls. The gender norms which hinder girls from accessing these technologies can be one of the elements which accentuates this gap”[[102]](#footnote-102).

*Humanitarian crises*

Despite all the above challenges, girls continue to advocate for gender equality and social justice, by choosing and playing leadership roles for their immediate family and community in the response to humanitarian crises. However, girls activists’ achievements most often remain unrecognised and undocumented.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Humanitarian crises, including the COVID-19, amplify the gender gap and social injustice that girls and young women experience in their daily life, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. [[104]](#footnote-104)-[[105]](#footnote-105) Girls’ pre-existing vulnerabilities to violence, abuse and exploitation are often exacerbated during crises, usually generated by harmful gender norms and structural inequalities.[[106]](#footnote-106) [[107]](#footnote-107) As a consequence of the closure of schools and more limited access to accountability mechanisms in humanitarian crises, girls are in many contexts forced to be at home and become more vulnerable to domestic violence and other forms of abuse.[[108]](#footnote-108) [[109]](#footnote-109) In humanitarian crisis, girls are also disproportionately more exposed to many other vulnerable situation[[110]](#footnote-110) [[111]](#footnote-111), such as permanent [school dropout](https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest), [poverty](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406), restricted access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights,[[112]](#footnote-112) and an increase in child marriages.[[113]](#footnote-113) [[114]](#footnote-114)

In times of crises, however, girls and women courageously increase their efforts and raise their voice to support their families and communities. During the ebola crisis, for instance, women’s groups in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia went door-to-door to educate communities on the spread of the virus.[[115]](#footnote-115) [[116]](#footnote-116)

Women’s and girls’ led organisations are key to challenge existing negative gender norms and offer long lasting solutions to humanitarian crises[[117]](#footnote-117), not “only” because in that way they are exercising their own rights, as affirmed in various human rights conventions and United Nations Resolutions.[[118]](#footnote-118) [[119]](#footnote-119) [[120]](#footnote-120) [[121]](#footnote-121) but also because their responses are tightly rooted in existing community structures.[[122]](#footnote-122) [[123]](#footnote-123) [[124]](#footnote-124) [[125]](#footnote-125) [[126]](#footnote-126) [[127]](#footnote-127) [[128]](#footnote-128). Nonetheless, girls are excluded by most of decision-making structures and processes[[129]](#footnote-129). In addition, very limited documentation on girls’ activism is available and more research is needed to understand the provide insights into its scope and support needs girls have in continuing their advocacy work.

* 1. **Regional spotlights:**
     1. **Americas**

COVID 19 was one of the most relevant emerging issues in recent years. Research conducted in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua provided evidence of three points in particular.

First, that the management of the pandemic had negative repercussions on already won rights, and that in some countries, this was used as a justification for the restriction and violation of fundamental rights. Young people reported that among the most violated rights were the right to education (59.3%), decent employment (57.9%), freedom of movement (56.5%) and sexual and reproductive rights (38.9%).

For girls and young women, the pandemic also meant greater exposure to gender-based violence. Isolation or confinement at home meant daily coexistence with their aggressors.

Second, youth played a key role in managing the pandemic in their communities. Youth mobilised to organise community and virtual campaigns to raise awareness of the pandemic (according to 51.49% of the organisations interviewed), delivery of protection kits (45.9%), and specialized online training, especially on their rights and protection routes (31.2%).

Third, the agendas and priorities of youth organisations have changed. Based on the impact of the pandemic, youth organisations state that their priorities now focus on training in digital activism (16.4%), political advocacy for the vindication of their rights (14.5%), mental health care (12.7%), and humanitarian assistance (7.3). Here it is important to highlight that 26.3% of the organisations confirmed that they will continue to seek strategies to contribute to community resilience and protection from COVID 19, and 16.4% will seek to expand services, assistance and programs to their target groups.

The findings confirm that youth are also demanding to be recognised as humanitarian actors. Several organisations express the need to specialize in these areas in order to contribute more effectively to the resilience of communities, in addition to having the financial resources to respond to the needs of other youth.

This is associated with the region's high level of vulnerability to the climate crisis. In 2020, Central America had to manage the pandemic and the impact of two hurricanes. UNICEF confirmed that more than 3.5 million children were affected by hurricanes IOTA and ETA. Youth are demonstrating their interest in organising around these issues.

1. **Recommendations and the way forward**

**Overarching recommendations**

* Protection, respect and promotion of girls' civil and political rights including the freedom of association, assembly, expression and access to information
* Removal of any of the structural barriers that prevent girls from self-organising e.g. legal registration, bank accounts, etc.
* Strengthen policies and strategies to tackle gender-based violence to be inclusive of digital spaces, tackle disinformation and adequate prevention and response strategies against attacks that target girl and young women activists and those in the public eye.
* Girls' participation in public policymaking - from consultation to participatory budgeting and accountability mechanisms - ensuring policies are responsive to girls' lived experiences but also enabling early exposure to decision-making and legislative spaces
* Adequate funding to girls' activism and participation - including through flexible resources to girl-led groups as well as into the infrastructure that enables formal participation like youth parliaments, mentorship and leadership programmes
* Proactive measures to address structural gender inequalities in the political system, including quotas for young women, lowering the age to run for office, etc.
* Address social norms inhibiting girls’ activism

**Specific recommendations for governments:**

*Social norms*

* Governments should adopt policies and fund public campaigns in partnership with civil society organisations that challenge harmful gender and social norms and that promote gender equality and the value of girls, boys and all young people’s voices and actions in public and political affairs.
* Governments should partner with civil society organisations to implement outreach programmes and public campaigns at the community, local and national level focusing on promoting gender equality, active citizenship and access to public spaces across all members of society including children and young people.
* Governments should encourage local and national media to use their platforms to promote positive content around gender equality and women’s leadership. They should amplify messages portraying a positive image of young women and men as leaders and change-makers. Furthermore, they should introduce legislation and policies that prevent and address the use of negative and harmful gender-stereotypes across public and commercial broadcasting and advertising.

*Investing in girls’ active citizenship*

* Governments should undertake a gender review of their Education Sector Plans including on curricula, textbooks, pedagogy and teacher training, to ensure that learning materials are non- discriminatory, gender responsive, inclusive and do not reinforce gender stereotyping around leadership roles and styles.
* Governments should ensure girls’ participation in schools as a crucial component of their learning process, where children learn to express themselves, develop their opinions and critical consciousness, listen to others, and build the necessary skills to become civic actors. Schools should provide spaces and opportunities for girls in particular to exercise their leadership and citizenship skills including through student councils, mock elections, and active engagement in school governance structures where they can liaise with their peers, teachers and parents.
* Governments should engage girls in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies, budgets and legislation on relevant issues. This will ensure public decisions are reflective of girls’ experiences and recommendations and to enable girls’ early exposure to decision-making and legislative spaces.[[130]](#footnote-130)

*Engagement in formal spaces*

* Governments must ensure young women’s appointment to leadership positions and participation within formal political processes and institutions are not obstructed by discriminatory laws relating to their age, gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or any other identity or condition.
* Governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, need to initiate programmes to make girls’ and young women’s participation an integral part of their policymaking. The first step in this regard is to provide legal guarantees of girls’ participation and support these with policies, administrative structures and budgets for effective implementation.
* Governments should consider the adoption of temporary measures such as quotas, to secure an increase in more young women’s representation in all their diversity in political leadership.
* Governments should reform any laws or policies and remove all discriminatory barriers that prevent young people and women from voting in regular, fair and free elections and/or running for public office. This includes ensuring eligibility is aligned to international and national age of majority and that participation is not dependent on consent for subject to interference from any relatives.

*Eliminating violence and harassment*

* Governments should take measures to ensure an enabling and fear-free environment in every sphere of government to encourage more girls and young women to become activists.

**Recommendations for donors:**

* Loosen red tape around funding applications, financial reporting and other aspects of grant management so as not to put a burden on girl- and young women-led groups, and allow them to concentrate on the work they want to do.
* As part of their Overseas Development Assistance, governments should consider allocating a proportion of foreign aid to support civil society strengthening within the recipient country. This should include earmarked funding towards grassroots youth-, girl and young women-led movements, groups, associations and organisations.
* All donors should provide flexible multi-year funding to unregistered, grassroots girl- and young women-led networks, organisations and associations. Donor required reporting, evaluation and accountability mechanisms should be co-designed with the children and young people themselves, making time for capacity building if needed.
* Donors, governments and NGOs must respect the autonomy of girl- and young women-led groups and associations, including where their organisational and decision-making structures may differ and follow non-hierarchical approaches. They should understand how the groups and associations operate and how to best support their work, including through financial and non-financial means.

**Recommendations for civil society**

* Create spaces for girls’ and young women’s activism and girl and young women’s groups to operate in multiple forms, and that include diverse groups
* Support dialogue between adult and younger activists and explore the ways in which young people can work with and benefit from the experience of adult and older activists and groups. This includes involving boys and men as partners, members and allies (which many girl and young women-led groups are doing in any case).
* Acknowledge the role of INGOs and adult organisations in fostering girls’ and young women’s activism, and lean into this, while enabling activists and groups to retain their autonomy.
* Support girl and young women activists and their groups to choose which issues they want to work on, supporting them to do so and not imposing a donor’s agenda or an INGO’s own structures and priorities.
* Help girl and young women activists and their groups access funding, resources and training, but work with them in a way that supports them to retain their independence and guards their own activism space.
* Consider the needs of girls’ and young women’s groups and help girl and young women activists understand the importance of self-care: support them to stay safe and keep their peers safe.
* Carefully design partnerships with girls’ and young women’s groups that they work with so that timing, ways of working and workload are realistic for the girl activists. This may mean choosing not to formally ‘partner’ but directing resources or mentoring girls and young women-led groups.

**Recommendations for internet companies**[[131]](#footnote-131)

* Create stronger, more effective and accessible reporting mechanisms specific to online gender-based violence, that hold perpetrators to account and are responsive to all girls’ needs and experiences, taking into account intersecting identities (including race and LGBTQIA+ youth).
* Work with girls and young women globally in all their diversity to co-create policy and technical solutions to address and prevent gender-based harassment and violence on social media platforms.
* Strengthen and improve content moderation to identify and remove gender-based violence in a timely fashion, also ensuring that there is parity, proportionality and transparency in their approach to content moderation across the globe.
* Hold perpetrators of gender-based online harassment to account, including by timely sanctioning of perpetrators, consistent with other platform violations.
* Take responsibility for creating a safe online environment for girls and young women in all of their diversity by initiating discussions on the topic of gender-based online harassment amongst social media users; providing reliable information on the topic to increase awareness, and providing digital citizenship education for all users.
* Collect and publish gender and age disaggregated data, in partnership with private entities and civil society, that provide insight into the scale, reach, measurement and nature of online harassment and violence against women and girls and the digital gender divide.

1. The She Leads programme is implemented in the global and regional programmes by Plan International, Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF), Terre des Hommes Lausanne Foundation, Terre des Hommes Italy, DCI-IS, DCI national sections, FEMNET, as well as each of these organisations’ local partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All of the She Leads consortium members have Special Consultative status with ECOSOC, with the exception of Plan International, who has General Consultative status with ECOSOC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CIVICUS. “State of Civil Society Report 2019”. 2019. Available at: https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. FRIDA Young Feminist (2016) Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organising [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. FRIDA Young Feminist (2016) Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organising [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Note: when using the term “girl”, we refer to those whose gender is female or who are identifying as a girl or a woman. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. OHCHR. “Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs.” Available at: [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Roger Hart. “Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship”. 1992. UNICEF. Available at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\_participation.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Plan International. “Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens.” March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Plan International. “Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens.” March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Plan International. “Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens.” March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For more information on meaningful youth participation, see https://www.youthdoit.org/themes/meaningful-youth-participation/flower-of-participation/ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Plan International. “Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens.” March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For more guidance on children as human rights defenders, please see: Child Rights Connect. “The Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders: Implementation Guide.” 2020. Available at: https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/final-implementation-guide-the-rights-of-child-human-rights-defenders-forweb.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. FRIDA. “No Straight Lines: Transformations with Young Feminist Organisers”. 2020. Available at: https://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Gopika Bashi, Lucia Martelotte, Boikanyo Modungwa & Maria Eugenia Olmos (2018) Young feminists’ creative strategies to challenge the status quo: a view from FRIDA, Gender & Development, 26:3, 439-457. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. FRIDA. “No Straight Lines: Transformations with Young Feminist Organisers”. 2020. Available at: https://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. FRIDA. “No Straight Lines: Transformations with Young Feminist Organisers”. 2020. Available at: https://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities - http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/62 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Plan International. “Free to Be Online?” 2020. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “Teen girls organised Nashville’s largest protest. They joined a long history of black women activists.” 8 June 2020. The Lily. https://www.thelily.com/teen-girls-organised-nashvilles-largest-protest-they-joined-a-long-history-of-black-women-activists/? [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. “These Teen Girls Are Fighting for a More Just Future.” 26 June 2020. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/style/teen-girls-black-lives-matter-activism.html [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Dazed. “What you need to know about indigenous climate activist Artemisa Xakriabá”. 27 September 2019. Available at: https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/46209/1/who-isindigenous-climate-change-activist-artemisa-xakriaba [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Dazed. “Inside the indigenous fight to save the Amazon rainforest” 21 August 2019. https://www.dazeddigital.com/politics/article/45703/1/the-fight-to-save-the-amazon-rainforest-youth-activist-protest [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Indigenous Peoples Rights International. “Rose Hayahay: Defending indigenous rights through education” 9 March 2021. Available at: https://www.iprights.org/news-and-events/news-and-features/rose-hayahay-defending-indigenous-rights-through-education [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. https://etfovoice.ca/feature/interview-autumn-peltier [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See videos [here](https://youtu.be/Peplg-BQ394), [here](https://youtu.be/dqENLWYFOB8) and [here](https://youtu.be/XGxaY2qZH5A). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See A/HRC/30/41, report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. FRIDA. “Brave, Creative, Resilient.” Available at: https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/frida-awid\_field-report\_final\_web\_issuu.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. OHCHR. “Discriminated and made vulnerable: Young LGBT and intersex people need recognition and protection of their rights International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.” 17 May 2015. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15941 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Anna Rorem and Monisha Bajaj, “Cultivating Young Women’s Leadership for a Kinder, Braver World,” The Kinder and Braver World Project: Research Series, Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, December 17, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Emily Bent, “The Boundaries of Girls’ Political Participation: A Critical Exploration of Girls’ Experiences as Delegates to the United Nations’ Commission on the Status of Women,” Global Studies of Childhood, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2013, p. 174 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/participation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Plan International. “Girls’ and Young Women’s Activism and Organising in West Africa.” June 2020. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/girls-young-womens-activism-west-africa> [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Plan International. “Girls’ and Young Women’s Activism and Organising in West Africa.” June 2020. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/girls-young-womens-activism-west-africa> [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. All information in the following section is drawn from: Plan International. “The 2021 Asia-Pacific Girls Report.” September 2021. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/2021-asia-pacific-girls-report [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Internal report. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Internal report. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Plan International (2019) Taking the Lead: Girls and Young Women Changing the Face of Leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Plan International & Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2019) Taking the Lead: Girls and Young Women Changing the Face of Leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. ODI (2016) Rapid Review: Women and Girls’ Leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Tam O’Neil and Georgia Plank, with Pilar Domingo, Support to women and girls’ leadership: A rapid review of the evidence, Overseas Development Institute (March 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Plan International. Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens. March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Plan International. Engaging girls, boys and youth as active citizens. March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. FRIDA. “No Straight Lines: Transformations with Young Feminist Organisers”. 2020. Available at: https://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. For more analysis on the position of girls within CSW65, read this blog by PlanInternational. https://plan-international.org/blog/2021/03/what-does-it-mean-have-csw-theme-doesnt-include-girls [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Child Rights Connect. *The Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders: Implementation Guide*. 2020. Available at: https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/final-implementation-guide-the-rights-of-child-human-rights-defenders-forweb.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Defence for Children International. “Empowering girls as human rights defenders with the Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA)” 1 October 2018. Available at: https://defenceforchildren.org/empowering-girls-as-human-rights-defenders-with-the-girls-advocacy-alliance/ [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Current agreed language at the Human Rights Council (i.e. A/HRC/RES/35/18) [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Vita. “"Prime Minister", così giovani donne crescono in politica” 7 April 2021. <http://www.vita.it/it/story/2021/04/07/prime-minister-cosi-giovani-donne-crescono-in-politica/395/> [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The Girls Advocacy Alliance was an initiative of Plan International Netherlands, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, and Defence for Children - ECPAT Netherlands, in cooperation with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The GAA programme ran from 2016 to 2020 in ten countries in Asia and Africa: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. The goal of the Girls Advocacy Alliance was to ensure that governments and private sector actors make changes in their agendas, policies, and practice to end GBV and economic exploitation of girls and young women. The programme aimed to achieve this by building the capacity of civil society organisations to hold their governments and private sector actors accountable, and by mobilising key decision-makers to address social norms and values. To this end, the GAA had an international component that conducted advocacy at the international level and provided support to local partners in ten countries in Africa and Asia. The International Programme of GAA was implemented in Geneva and New York by Plan International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Defence for Children International, and ECPAT International. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. “Girls and Young Women’s Empowerment Framework.” 2014. Available at: <https://www.togetherforgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Final_Girls-and-Young-Womens-Empowerment-Framework-Oct-2014-Zimbabwe.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. FAO. “Enabling young rural women to participate in rural transformation in East and Southern Africa”. 2019. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3434EN/ca3434en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. All information in the following section is drawn from: Plan International. “The 2021 Asia-Pacific Girls Report.” September 2021. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/2021-asia-pacific-girls-report [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Plan International. *Engaging Girls, Boys and Youth as Active Citizens.* 2019. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Plan International UK. *The State of Girls’ Rights in the UK*. 2016. Available at: https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-international-uk-2016-uk-girls-rights-report/download?token=FRzEohTi [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Inter-Agency Working Group on Children’s Participation (2008) Children as Active Citizens. ECPAT International, Knowing Children, Plan International, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, UNICEF and World Vision. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. EC-UNDP Joint Initiative (2017) Youth Participation in Electoral Processes: Handbook for Electoral Management Boards. March 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2016) Compendium of good practices for advancing women’s political participation in the OSCE region(online) www.osce.org/odihr/224206?download=true (accessed: 10 July 2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Weathering the Storm: Resourcing girl and Young Women Activists through a Pandemic.. May 2021. Available at: https://32f781d5-df7d-41f7-802b-9eb4dbe7971f.filesusr.com/ugd/9f4592\_9686444d84af49d7a4e27faf0849967c.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Plan International. Engaging Girls, Boys and Youth as Active Citizens: Plan International Position Paper. March 2020. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/engaging-girls-boys-and-youth-active-citizens#download-options [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. AWID, 2019, Towards a Feminist Funding Ecosystem [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. FRIDA Young Feminist Fund (2016) Brave, Creative, Resilient. The Global State of Young Feminist Organising. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. FRIDA. “No Straight Lines: Transformations with Young Feminist Organisers”. 2020. Available at: https://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Plan International. Free to Be Online? (2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The World Wide Web Foundation, 12 March 2020. The online crisis facing women and girls threatens global progress on gender equality accessed at https://webfoundation.org/2020/03/the-online-crisis-facing-women-and-girls-threatens-global-progress-on-gender-equality/ on 9 June 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Internet-based practice of researching and publicly broadcasting private or identifying information (especially personally identifying information) about an individual or organisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Amnesty International (2018) Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women accessed at https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/ on 3 December 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. #DigitalRespect4Her Factsheet, European Commission, 2019:<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digitalrespect4her-factsheet> [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. UN broadband Commission for digital development, 2015.<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/9/cyber-violence-report-press-release> [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. “Breaking the Silence: Ending online violence and abuse against women’s rights activists.” Womankind. 2018.<https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/breaking-the-silence-policy-briefing.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Plan International (2020). Free to be online? https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Plan International (2020). Free to be online? https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Plan International (2020). Free to be online? https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/man-charged-manslaughter-stabbing-death-14-year-old-sister>; https://www.dw.com/en/social-media-uptick-in-honor-crime-in-middle-east/a-56370773 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Plan International. “The Truth Gap”. October 2021. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/truth-gap [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. CIVICUS. State of Civil Society Report 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. CIVICUS. State of Civil Society Report 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The World Economic Forum. The Global Risks Report 2021. 16th Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Bradshaw, S. and Howard, P.N. 2019. The Global Disinformation Order: 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media

    Manipulation. Oxford Internet Institute. Oxford: University of Oxford. 2019. https://comprop.oii. ox.ac.uk/wp-

    content/uploads/sites/93/2019/09/CyberTroop-Report19.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. http://nostraightlines.youngfeministfund.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) Day of General Discussion: Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders. Outcome report. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities - http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/62 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (2020, Right to freedom of association of migrants and their defenders) https://www.undocs.org/A/HRC/44/42 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. The Guardian. “The girls aiming to change Africa: young activists speak out.” 1 September 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/sep/01/girls-rights-activists-change-africa-disability-gender-equality-fgm> [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. “Girls and Young Women’s Empowerment Framework.” 2014. Available at: <https://www.togetherforgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Final_Girls-and-Young-Womens-Empowerment-Framework-Oct-2014-Zimbabwe.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. FAO. “Enabling young rural women to participate in rural transformation in East and Southern Africa”. 2019. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3434EN/ca3434en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. FAO. “Enabling young rural women to participate in rural transformation in East and Southern Africa”. 2019. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3434EN/ca3434en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. All information in the following section is drawn from: Plan International. “The 2021 Asia-Pacific Girls Report.” September 2021. Available at: https://plan-international.org/publications/2021-asia-pacific-girls-report [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. NPR (2020). Why Rights Groups Worry About The Philippines’ New Anti-Terrorism Law. Available from: https://www.npr.org/2020/07/21/893019057/why-rights-groups-worry-about-

    the-philippines-new-anti-terrorism-law [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, March 2021. [WEF\_GGGR\_2021.pdf (weforum.org)](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Indifesa 2021, The condition of the girl child worldwide, Terre des Hommes [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. "Coronavirus research hub: the latest on global consumer impact."<https://www.globalwebindex.com/coronavirus>. Accessed 9 Jul. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. "Media Consumption in the Age of COVID-19 | J.P. Morgan." 1 May. 2020,<https://www.jpmorgan.com/global/research/media-consumption>. Accessed 9 Jul. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. "Facebook Usage Soars, But Online Advertising Plunges - WSJ." 24 Mar. 2020,<https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-warns-that-skyrocketing-usage-wont-lead-to-increased-revenue-11585083493>. Accessed 9 Jul. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. "The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2020 - GSMA."<https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GSMA-The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2020.pdf>. Accessed 28 Sep. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. www.statista.com/statistics/725778/countries-with-the-lowest-internet-penetration-rate/ accessed 10 June 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. [COVID-19 and education: The digital gender divide among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa - Evidence for Action (unicef.org)](https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/covid-19-and-education-the-digital-gender-divide-among-adolescents-in-sub-saharan-africa/) [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Indifesa 2021, The condition of the girl child worldwide, Terre des Hommes [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. J. Jochim, L. Rumble, R. Bransky, B. Modungwa, G. Booth, L. Asrari, A. Wright, M. Askham. “Girl-led activism in humanitarian crises: Implications for programmes and policymaking in COVID-19.” 18 February 2021. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/girl-led-activism-in-humanitarian-crises-implications-for-programmes-and-policymaking-in-covid-19> [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. The World Bank Country and Lending Groups. Available at: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Development initiates. *Global humanitarian assistance report 2019*. (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Care. *Women and girls in emergencies*. (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Davies, S. E. & Bennett, B. A gendered human rights analysis of Ebola and Zika: Locating gender in global health emergencies. *Int. Aff.* 92, 1041–1060 (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. UNICEF. *COVID-19 - GBV risks to adolescent girls and interventions to protect and empower them*. (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Cousins, S. COVID-19 has "devastating" effect on women and girls. *Lancet* 396, (Elsevier Ltd, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. PMA Agile / Gender & ICRHK. *Gender & Covid-19: Safety and violence.* Baltimore, Maryland, USA: Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Burki, T. The indirect impact of COVID-19 on women. *Lancet* 20, 904–905 (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. PMA Agile / Gender & ICRHK. *Gender & Covid-19: Access to health and contraception*. Baltimore, Maryland, USA: Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Jones, N. *et al.* Listening to Young People’s Voices under COVID-19: Child marriage risks in the context of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. (2020). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f314dec8fa8f57acac337db/GAGE-Covid-19-Ethiopia-child-marriage.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Grant, H. Why Covid school closures are making girls marry early. (2020). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/sep/07/why-covid-school-closures-are-making-girls-marry-early. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Mutima, N., Gitomer, S. & Hobson, S. Women’s organisations fighting Ebola should be funded as a first-line defence. (2015). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/apr/08/womens-organisations-fighting-ebola-funding-first-line-defence-liberia-guinea-sierra-leone. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Airey, S. *Ebola: what next for women and girls?* (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Bradshaw, S. *Gender, Development and Disasters*. Edward Elgar Publishing (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). (1979). Other UN Conferences which have focused on the specificities of women’s rights and gender concerns are: the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) [on youth, peace and security], 18 March 2016, S/RES/2250 (2015), available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/56ebfd654.html [accessed 20 January 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) [on women and peace and security], 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325 (2000), available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f4672e.html [accessed 20 January 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html [accessed 20 January 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Bradshaw, S. & Fordham, M. *Women, girls and disasters - A review for DFID*. (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Fordham, M., Gupta, S., Akerkar, S. & Scharf, M. *Leading resilient development. Grassroots women’s priorities, practices, and innovations*. *UNDP Publications and GROOTS International* (2011). Available at: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/womens-empowerment/leading-resilient-development---grassroots-women-priorities-practices-and-innovations/f2\_GROOTS\_Web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Htun, M. & Weldon, S. L. The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975-2005. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 106, 548–569 (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. WomanKind. *Standing with the changemakers: Lessons from supporting women’s movements*. (2017). Available at: https://www.womankind.org.uk/resource/standing-with-the-changemakers-lessons-from-supporting-womens-movements/ [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Parke, A. The Indonesia earthquake and tsunami: Why women’s leadership worked. (2019). Available at: https://www.actionaid.org.uk/blog/policy-and-research/2019/09/27/the-indonesia-earthquake-and-tsunami-why-womens-leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Moreno, J. & Shaw, D. Women’s empowerment following disaster: A longitudinal study of social change. *Nat. Hazards* 92, 205–224 (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Al-Abdeh, M. & Patel, C. ‘Localising’ humanitarian action: Reflections on delivering women’s rights-based and feminist services in an ongoing crisis. *Gend. Dev.* 27, 237–252 (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Wenham, C., Smith, J. & Morgan, R. COVID-19: The gendered impacts of the outbreak. *Lancet* 395, 846–848 (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. African Child Policy Forum. “Unheard stories of girls in Africa: My voice counts. Background study to The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2020.” https://www.africanchildforum.org/index.php/en/featured-publications/unheard-stories-of-girls-in-africa-my-voice-counts-background-study-to-the-african-report-on-child-wellbeing-2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The recommendations in this section have been taken from Plan International’s 2020 Free to be online? Report, pages 51-52. Accessible at https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline [↑](#footnote-ref-131)