

# ON THE MAP: Charting the Landscape of Girl Work



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# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

The United Nations Foundation (UNF) and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) have worked for many years to advance girls around the world. Recognizing the recent growth in girl-related attention and investment, ICRW undertook an initial mapping exercise in 2009 to understand more about the current landscape of “girl work” in the developing world. This paper presents the key findings from this exercise, describing what we have learned about the donors and organizations engaged in girl work, the policy and program efforts underway, and current and future directions for the field. It is hoped that the findings and considerations emerging from this mapping exercise will contribute toward a more strategic and coordinated effort to mobilize additional actors, resources and ideas on behalf of girls around the world.

# Background

Over the past five years, a number of organizations have worked to address the needs of girls in developing countries and, in doing so, have made a strong case for focusing special attention on this demographic group. Publications like *Girls Count*<sup>1</sup> and *Because I Am a Girl*,<sup>2</sup> and websites like [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org) present broad and compelling arguments about why it is important for diverse players in the international development arena to invest heavily in this neglected group. The research underlying these advocacy efforts shows that the essential decisions that shape the course of girls' lives are made during adolescence. In addition, data indicate that delaying marriage and childbirth, and investing in girls' education and their opportunities to earn income yield high returns in terms of their health, and the economic and social well being of their families.<sup>3</sup>

These advocacy efforts have contributed to the burgeoning of policy and program investments to improve the lives of girls. While much girl-related work was happening before this recent upsurge, events of the past five years have brought the needs of girls more visibly and centrally into the international development discourse. This year, for example, the Clinton Global Initiative included a crosscutting focus called, "Investing in Girls and Women," fostering discussion on the types of investments in and solutions for girls and women that would accelerate progress.<sup>4</sup> Although girls receive a disproportionately small share of the total development dollars invested globally each year, it is clear that the overall girl landscape has shifted and that the field is primed for even greater action and investment. But before charting the way forward, it is important to understand more about current efforts underway on behalf of girls.

With this in mind, ICRW designed a mapping exercise to identify the scope and range of girl work being undertaken by key development actors and to analyze the core directions, synergies, opportunities, and gaps inherent across the efforts of multiple stakeholders. While data collection originally focused on "adolescent girls," we did not limit responses and instead allowed participants to share their interpretations and working definitions for the girl work they conduct. As a result of the variations in populations reached, the term "girl" is used in its broadest sense throughout this report and encompasses a diversity of characteristics, including age and developmental status. Given the richness of the data obtained from diverse voices and experiences, much of the information presented here explores girl work at a higher level, drawing out some common findings and future considerations for the field.

# Methodology

The methodology for this mapping effort included inventorying and analyzing the efforts of a sub-set of stakeholders working on behalf of girls around the world. ICRW began this exercise by identifying international organizations or stakeholders known to have a significant commitment to girls. This included UN agencies, bilateral donors and foundations based in the United States and Europe who fund girl initiatives; international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who implement girl programs; and research or advocacy organizations that have a focus on the lives and rights of girls. We created an inventory of each group's efforts and based on an analysis of these activities, prioritized those organizations that had a unique approach, sphere of influence, or geographic or sectoral emphasis. We then approached this sub-set of organizations and asked them to participate in an online survey. In addition, we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews by phone with select organizations and individuals.

## *Program Scan*

ICRW developed an online survey to gather information from and about organizations that work with girls (see Appendix 1 for the survey tool).<sup>\*</sup> The survey focused on the sectors or topic areas addressed through the organization's girl work; the target groups of girls or other populations served; their geographical focus; and other basic characteristics of when and why they became engaged in girl-related work. The online survey tool included both closed and open-ended questions, which allowed for some consistency in data across all respondents, while also providing each organization with the opportunity to provide additional details specific to their work.

Through our existing networks, web searches and recommendations from sister organizations, we prioritized 111 stakeholder groups that were invited to complete the online survey. In total, 65 online surveys were submitted, for a response rate of almost 59%. Information from these 65 surveys form the basic dataset for the analysis contained within this report. Details on the survey respondents are presented in Appendix 2.

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<sup>\*</sup> Survey questions focused on work conducted for adolescent girls, but also allowed for organizations to provide information on other populations of girls reached. In general, a majority of programs worked with girls in the adolescent age range, particularly 13-19 years old.

## ***In-depth Interviews***

After the program scan, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants engaged in girl work representing each of the four groups working in the adolescent girl arena—donors, implementers, advocates and researchers. The interviewees were selected as representatives of especially influential or uniquely positioned organizations, or as individuals who could provide specific insights into the current and future state of the girl field. Details on the interviewees are presented in Appendix 3.

For each group, we asked questions on specific themes:

- **Donors**—*Who is investing in girls? For which donors are girls a central focus? What kind of investments are they making, in what areas? Why girls?*
- **Program implementers**—*Which organizations are implementing what types of programs with which girls? Which girls may be left out? What are the major challenges to working with girls?*
- **Research organizations**—*To what extent are the investments translating into new and improved evidence on programs for girls? What are the emerging insights from this work? Where are the gaps?*
- **Advocacy groups**—*What kinds of advocacy efforts relating to programs and policies are being conducted to improve the lives of girls? Where is advocacy most needed, and where are the gaps?*

We also asked a number of general questions about girl-focused responses, including:

- *Do you think there has been an upsurge in investment in girls, and if so why has it occurred?*
- *What trends in programming for adolescent girls do you perceive? What do you see as the gaps in programs and investments for girls?*
- *What is the “recipe” for doing work with girls? How can we bring about real change in how girls are viewed?*

Not all questions were asked during each in-depth interview; rather they were used as a guide to help shape the conversation. This interview structure allowed for flexible conversations that permitted ICRW to respond to the specific insights and directions identified by the interviewees.

## ***Data Limitations***

Data collection and analysis for both the online survey and the interviews intentionally focused on international or influential organizations. This exercise does not present an exhaustive picture of what is happening for girls at a regional, national or grassroots level. We view this exercise as an initial step in a larger iterative process that will map the efforts of an ever growing and more diverse group of organizations working worldwide on behalf of girls in an ongoing way. Additionally, as this exercise looked at organizations and not specific programs, we cannot speak to the overall magnitude or scale of program work underway. It is possible, for example, that we received information on the same program from both a donor and an implementer.

Some online surveys were not fully completed, with 12 of the total 65 surveys submitting partial responses. All the available data are included, where respondents left questions blank, these data points appear as “missing” in the tables. The survey data were analyzed using STATA to produce frequencies and cross tabulations of the variables. There is also an inherent limitation in using a “remote” online survey approach; although we tried to clarify terms used within the survey, some were left open to the interpretation or definition of the respondent (e.g., one organization’s definition of advocacy could have been quite different from another).

A challenge in conducting this kind of review is that while an organization may fund or conduct girl work, this may not be a global initiative and girl-engagement may vary from country to country. As a consequence, it can be difficult to identify the correct individual or department primarily responsible for—or fully informed about—the organization’s girl programming, especially if different activities are underway in different locations. Therefore, although we could comfortably identify many organizations who engage in girl work, we may not have always targeted the right individual to complete the actual survey. This, along with our fielding the survey during summer months when many staff were away from the office, may have contributed to the lack of response from several organizations who do work with girls and the incomplete answers from some of the organizations who did respond.

Given the above, as well as the qualitative nature of the in-person interviews, it is important to make a disclaimer about the comparability of responses across respondents. Survey responses and interview data often reflect the unique perspective or interpretation of the respondent, and we have made an effort to indicate this, as relevant, in the presentation of results and findings.

# Findings

This report presents the key findings from the mapping exercise. The findings are organized around large themes, reflecting the broad range of topics covered in the online survey and interviews, as well as the varied perspectives of the different respondents. The three theme areas include:

- A. Organizations engaged in girl work
- B. Areas of girl work underway
- C. Current and future investment environment for girl work

For each finding (or set of findings), we present the relevant data, integrating information obtained through both the survey and the interviews. The final section presents the overall conclusions and considerations for the field emerging from the full mapping exercise.

## ***A. Key Findings on Organizations Engaged in Girl Work***

One of the persistent gaps in our understanding of the girl field is a basic picture of the different players who have taken up this issue. Who are these organizations? How long have they been working on adolescent girl issues and where? What work do they do and how do they go about doing it? What girls do they serve through these efforts? And what motivates or drives these organizations to engage in girl work? These are some of the fundamental questions that we explored, and the findings are presented below.

***Finding 1: The girl arena includes a diverse range of actors, many of whom play multiple roles and bring varying motivations to their work.*** This diversity of actors and their motivations is important to understand because it determines the nature of the programs, research and advocacy being conducted on behalf of girls. This is compounded by the fact that many organizations function as both funder and implementer, giving them even more opportunities to determine how girl work is designed and carried forward on the ground.

- **Organization Type:** In implementing our survey, we deliberately invited a wide array of organizations to participate. We assigned responding organizations to one of four groups on the basis of what we knew already about their primary activities or roles in girl work: donor, program implementer, research organization or advocacy group (see Table 1). The 65 respondents generally reflected the pattern we expected for this field, with more engaged as donors and implementers, and fewer focused on advocacy or research on girls.



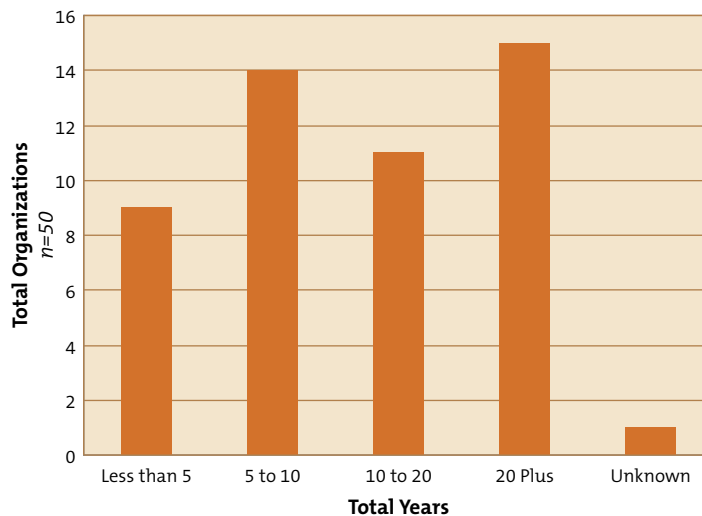
**Table 1: Type of Organization**

Type of Organization	Total
Program Implementer	24
Donor	22
Research Organization	7
Advocacy Group	12

n=65

- **Years of Engagement in Girl Work:** Despite the general sense that the momentum around work with girls is a recent development, several organizations indicated that they have been working with girls for over five years (see Figure 1). Surprisingly, 14 organizations indicated that their work began more than 20 years ago. This may be a reflection of the organizations that we invited to participate, often being larger, more established institutions. Even so, given that these are some of the biggest players in the field of girl work, it is important to recognize that a sizeable group of organizations have had girls as part of their agenda for many years.

**Figure 1: Number of Years Working with Adolescent Girls**



- **Reaching Girls Directly or Indirectly:** Most organizations, 56 of the 65 respondents, work directly with girls. A similar number (54 of the 65) also support girls more indirectly, working through the different stakeholders who influence girls' lives. These might include mothers, fathers or teachers, for example. Interestingly, two-thirds of respondents also said they are funding work for girls, although they not necessarily identified as typical "donor" agencies. This tells us that more girl actors than we expected are engaged in developing and driving work aimed at girls by supporting and promoting the work of *other* organizations that are their sub-grantees.
- **Approach to Engaging in Girl Work:** In conducting this mapping exercise, it was also important to understand *why* these organizations choose to invest in girl programming (or choose to invest funds in developing girl portfolios). We explored this issue in both the survey and the interviews, with an eye toward gaining insights into what might attract greater investment and involvement in this important area.

When asked if and how their work with girls linked to their organizational missions, respondents raised a number of themes. Many talked about girls as essential members of their communities and societies, especially as an important vulnerable group that requires a safe environment in which to grow and develop. Those who said empowerment was fundamental to their mission saw releasing girls' potential as agents of change as absolutely central to achieving an equitable and humane society.

Of great interest to us was how each organization approaches or explains the need to work with girls. Groups use multiple frameworks for their work with girls, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Organizational Frameworks for Working with Girls**

Framework	Totals
Rights-based Approach	32
Global Public Health Framework	24
Economic	24
Political	10
Other	3

*n=65 multiple responses permitted*

Given the total number of responses across all frameworks, it is clear that some organizations bring multiple approaches to their girl work. Most prevalent, with nearly half of organizations reflecting this point of view, was the rights-based approach. A public health or economic-based framework also was mentioned frequently, representing, perhaps, a more traditional perspective on working with girls and a newer one, respectively. The last major category was political, overlapping with aspects of a rights-based approach and including those organizations with a commitment to adolescent girls' participation and engagement as citizens. Those who answered "other" nonetheless made reference to women's rights or human rights as their overarching framework. Finally, several groups emphasized building girls' assets, both material and educational.

- **Applying a Gender Lens:** Given our work and areas of expertise, we were interested in learning if organizations apply a gender lens to their work on behalf of adolescent girls. We started by asking if they viewed gender inequality as a major obstacle to their work, and every organization but one answered in the affirmative. For these respondents, at least, it appears that gender is central to the challenges that face girls, and this was reinforced during the interviews where organizations consistently expressed their recognition of this important dynamic. We then asked how each organization addressed gender inequality in its programming, research, funding or advocacy. No organizations responded that they had adopted a "neutral" approach to their work. Fifteen organizations said their work was gender sensitive. The highest number, 35 organizations, stated that they were taking a more ambitious "gender transformative" approach to addressing gender inequalities.

**Finding 2: Despite the diversity of actors and agendas, most stakeholders have a broad, holistic purpose underlying their girl work.** During the interviews, we sought to probe more deeply into what drives organizations to engage in girl work. Interestingly, although specific motivations were varied, many organizations reported having a broad, holistic, and long-term purpose to investing in and implementing activities on behalf of girls. This seems to cut across different sectors and organization types.

- **From the Health Sector:** Overall, health-oriented organizations, for example, reported focusing on a specific area of girls' health, mainly reproductive health. In general, all of these actors saw the importance of good health in ensuring girls' successful transition to adulthood. Most, however, linked health to a broader set of objectives for girls. Donors consistently made connections between reproductive health, education and development when they spoke of their investments in girls' health. Implementers and advocates focused more on preventing ill-health and premature death, but also talked of fostering a world where girls are recognized fully as citizens and are given access to the services—including health services—they need. Two organizations linked girls' health outcomes to even longer-term goals: they referred to girls' future roles as decision-makers for their families, noting that girls who have access to health information and services now will ensure food security, health and nutrition for their families in the future.
- **From the Education Sector:** Groups committed to educating girls expressed a similarly wide range of motivations, often going well beyond the immediate education attainment of girls. Some referred to how empowerment through education would enable them to take control of their lives, also emphasize the association between education and leadership. Respondents noted the proven, significant returns on girls' education, in terms of the continued benefits that this education brings to a woman, her family and community. Others noted that education is fundamental in overcoming prejudice against girls, providing a critical stepping stone towards greater change for girls.
- **From the Economic Empowerment Sector:** Several organizations view economics as fundamental to the empowerment of girls, and ultimately to the bottom line of economic growth for families, communities and entire nations. This paradigm of growth can also extend to the funders: one private sector donor noted that, "supporting girls is critical to economic development, which allows us to build and grow our business sustainably."

**Finding 3: The girl arena reaches a broad base of girls and addresses a wide range of issues.** When examining the work conducted by our sample of actors, we were surprised to see how evenly their efforts were distributed across sectors, regions and the different sub-sets of girl populations served. While there are gaps, the general impression is that a broad range of girls and girl needs are being addressed. As we also present later in this document, however, this may mean that the limited resources available for girls are being spread too thinly across multiple activities and populations.

- **Areas (or Sectors) of Work:** In our analysis of the survey and qualitative data, we applied a simple framework to organize activities benefitting girls. This framework builds loosely on the basic framework outlined in *Girls Count*, which classifies work with girls into five major categories: cultural practices (child marriage and female genital cutting), health (HIV, reproductive health), education, economic opportunities, and human rights (violence, child labor, trafficking). The main distinction of the framework used in this analysis is that we collapsed the cultural practices and human rights categories into a

single “general empowerment” concept, as we saw these things as being closely related to one another. Therefore, the general empowerment category encompasses child marriage, general life skills, chore burden reduction, property and land rights, civic rights and protection from violence.

We asked survey respondents to classify their work according to in four “sectors”: health, education, economic opportunities and general empowerment. As shown in Table 3, donors, implementers, researchers and advocates spread their efforts relatively equally over the four sectors, and no one sector appears to be particularly neglected by our respondents. The donors in our study appear somewhat less likely to fund education efforts and more likely to support health, general empowerment and economic empowerment. This may be because education is seen as primarily the responsibility of government and therefore not the domain of bilateral donors or private foundations.

**Table 3: Organizational Work According to Sector**

Sectors by Type	Health	General Empowerment	Education	Economic Empowerment
Implementer (n=24)	23	22	20	21
Donor (n=22)	14	13	9	11
Research (n=7)	6	6	5	5
Advocacy (n=12)	7	7	8	5
Total (n=65)	50	48	42	43

*multiple responses permitted*

- **Geographic Coverage:** Table 4 shows the geographical distribution of girl-related activity for the organizations in our study. In general, activity is quite widely distributed geographically. Of particular note is how much is happening in Africa, divided here into West, Eastern and Southern regions. The Middle East and North Africa appears relatively underserved by those participating in this exercise.

**Table 4: Geographical Focus**

Region	Total
Latin America and the Caribbean	30
Middle East and North Africa	20
West Africa	30
East Africa	40
Southern Africa	32
South Asia	29
Southeast Asia and Pacific	27
East Asia	17
Europe	13
North America	15
Missing/No Response	12

*n=65 multiple responses permitted*

Most responding organizations work in at least two regions; the greatest numbers work in three to six regions. This suggests that many organizations engaged in girl-related activities have the potential to influence girl work more broadly and across regions. Although we also asked respondents to share the specific countries in which they were working, the responses were too inconsistent and incomplete to include in our analysis.

- **Girls Reached:** Another challenge within the girl field is the diversity of definitions and target populations included under this umbrella. To understand this, we asked respondents to share their definitions of “girl” and also provide information about the girls and other populations targeted through their work. Despite varying responses, a few key defining characteristics of “girls” emerged:
  - *Age:* The majority of organizations use age as the main dimension of defining “girls.” However, organizations employ different parameters—both in terms of labels (e.g., girl vs. adolescent vs. young woman/person), as well as age ranges (e.g., using the World Health Organization’s age ranges as a standard). In the interviews, some respondents noted that there can be variation within their overall girl programming, depending on donor or country requirements.
  - *Life Cycle:* Only a small number of respondents indicated that they use life cycle stages to define girls; six respondents stated they use age and the life cycle together for their definitions.
  - *Marginalized:* A large number of organizations indicated that they work with girls of specific racial or ethnic minority status (as per country demographics).
  - *At-risk:* An overwhelming majority said that they worked with girls who face specific risks, including girls who are vulnerable to trafficking, orphans and vulnerable children and those affected by HIV/AIDS, low-income girls, sex workers, out-of-school populations, migratory populations, girls vulnerable to child marriage, those requiring fistula treatment, those who face violence, those at risk of dropping out from school, married adolescents and street youth. Respondents repeatedly stressed poverty as a key vulnerability that influences who they target, a characteristic that often overlaps with the other at-risk factors mentioned here.

Level of education and stage in the life cycle did not factor as a key determining characteristic for many organizations. By contrast, levels of vulnerability or risk seemed to be much more of a factor, supported by comments during follow-up interviews, although there is great variation in how organizations define “vulnerability,” “marginalization” and “at-risk.” As noted above, definitions also vary *within* organizations in work from country to country, reflecting local priorities and donor demands.

Organizations also provided basic information on the general socio-demographic characteristics of the girls they work with. The data are presented in the following table (see Table 5). The missing responses indicate that organizations were not targeting their work with girls by that particular dimension (whether age, marital status, education or location).

**Table 5: Overview of Girls Reached**

Girl Characteristics	Yes
<b>Age</b>	
Younger than 10 years	28
10-12 years	38
13-15 years	47
16-19 years	49
20-24 years	39
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	44
Unmarried	48
Cohabiting	34
<b>Education Level</b>	
Primary	43
Secondary	41
Tertiary or above	22
<b>Location</b>	
Rural	42
Urban	40
Peri urban	38
<b>Pregnant teenagers or girls with children</b>	44

*n=65 multiple responses permitted*

A clear majority of organizations who responded to our survey indicated that they worked with girls aged 13-15 years (47 organizations) and 16-19 years (49 organizations). Younger girls appear to be a relatively unreached group, with only 28 organizations serving girls younger than 10 years, and 38 targeting girls aged 10-12 years. In terms of educational attainment, about two-thirds of responding organizations (43) reported working with girls at the primary level, and 41 reported working with girls at the secondary level. Similar numbers of organizations indicated they worked with married (44) and unmarried (48) girls, an interesting finding that runs counter to the common perception that young married women may systematically be neglected by programs working with girls. Cohabiting girls are least likely to be served by programs, but even there, a half of organizations (34) stated they work with these girls. Based on the survey data, our sense is that organizations do not *exclude* girls of any given marital status, even though they may not actively work to *include* them.

The spread of organizations working in urban, peri-urban and rural areas was also surprisingly even. It is possible that had we asked more detailed questions about *how* rural or *how* urban, (i.e., the size of communities, distance from roads, etc.), we would likely have seen greater discrepancies in the extent of investments in girls by geographic location.

It is also interesting to note that many organizations (42) work with “influencers.” Given the context of girls lives in many places around the developing world, it is encouraging that the field is making an effort to work with those who influence or control aspects of their lives. Mothers (30), fathers (28) and teachers (29) are of particular interest, but organizations are also reaching out to brothers, sisters, health care providers, religious leaders and community organizations. With only 12 respondents working with employers, this seems to be the most underserved group, an important finding given the increased attention on the economic potential of girls.

**“(We) need to (show) that if you work with a 12-year old now, it has a tremendous impact on the 22-year old she becomes.”**

–Implementing organization representative

Given the global scope of the majority of organizations included in our survey, it is perhaps, not as surprising that so many profiles of girls are being reached—whether they are specifically targeted or are included by default. This sense was reinforced during the interviews. According to our interviewees, much more attention is now being given to the fact that girls are not a homogeneous group. Program design and evaluation are much more closely

tailored to age, marital status and other conditions of life and home setting. In addition, there seems also to be greater acknowledgement or desire to work with some sub-sets of girls, such as younger girls.

***Finding 4: Although many issues are being addressed for multiple profiles of girls, the level of programmatic and funding commitment for these efforts remains unclear.***

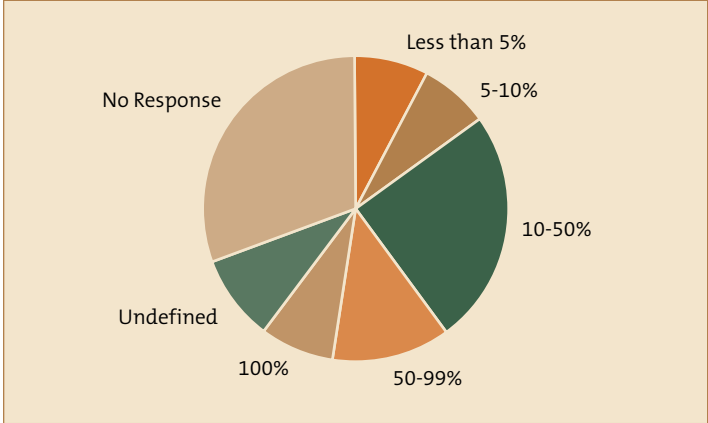
One of the key challenges for those in the girl arena is forming a picture of the total investment being directed at girls. Even within the broader development world, it is often difficult to track funding to see how specific beneficiary groups are affected. Girls are particularly easy to lose: programs benefiting young people in general also affect girls, and programs for women may also benefit girls, but the true extent to which girls are actually using services or benefiting from broader interventions is unclear. Therefore, we made a particular effort to include survey questions that asked about the scale of budgetary and programmatic commitments made by organizations engaged in girl work.

Of the organizations that responded to our survey, 45 were able to provide some sense of the proportion of their overall program work that is dedicated to girls, and 42 shared information about their funding allocations for girls. The rest were unable or unwilling to share these details, again reflecting a larger problem for the development field. This was also a topic where organizations may have interpreted the survey questions or calculated results differently, making it difficult to ensure consistency between respondents. In many ways, the key finding from this is the continued *lack* of data about investment levels.

Despite these limitations, survey responses did yield some interesting points. Figures 2 and 3 show the wide range of programmatic and financial commitments to girls. Respondents provided a rough percent of their overall work (in terms of activities on the ground) and funding (in terms of dollars received to support activities on the ground) that are directed towards girls. Some organizations commit 100% of their effort towards girls, while others include girls as one out of many beneficiary groups. Although there are many organizations who could not define their commitment levels, there is a noticeable group who dedicate

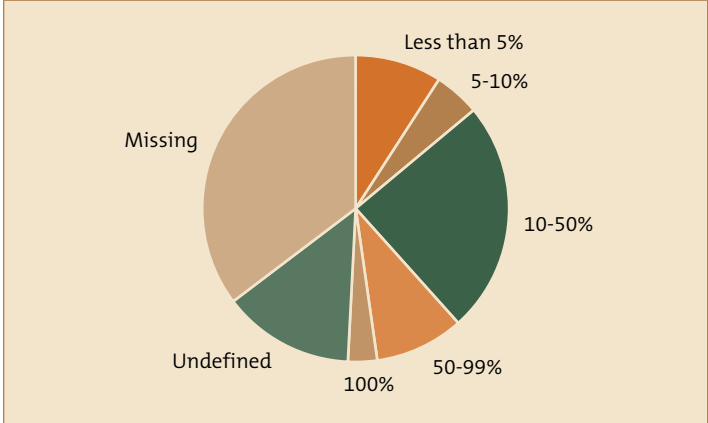
more than 50% of their work to girls. More interestingly, it seems that the relative program proportion is consistently higher than explicit budget commitments to girls, indicating a sense that girls are benefiting from investments in other programmatic areas, or that the per girl expenditure is lower than spending on other demographic groups.

**Figure 2: Girl Programs as Proportion of Total**



n=65

**Figure 3: Girl Funding as Proportion of Total**



n=65

**Finding 5: There is substantial interest in—and some concern about—the priorities of corporate sector investors in girls.** Throughout the interviews, many respondents mentioned the growing involvement of the private sector and corporate players in the girl arena. Interviewees particularly noted that the entrance of some newer actors, like the Nike Foundation, have been instrumental in bringing fresh energy to the girl field. At the same time, respondents also raised a number of questions about the long-term commitment to invest in girls. The need to understand the perspectives and priorities of corporate entities was seen as being pivotal to the future of girl work, given the current and potential influence that such actors have over how and why investments are made. Interestingly, this was raised by representatives from within the private and corporate sectors, not just from those who operate in other spheres.



There is acute awareness throughout the girl field that corporations—whether as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives or as separate foundations—are increasing involvement in the girl arena. Indeed, we deliberately included several corporate foundation/entities to participate in this exercise, along with some of the key private sector foundations that have included girls as part of their agenda for many years. Given the diversity within the private sector category, it is not surprising that there is variation in what motivates and fosters engagement in girl work.

What is interesting is the concern that many respondents expressed about their lack of information on corporate sector interest in girls or how they could best work with the corporate sector to achieve common goals. One private sector donor observed: “Companies are not engaging in purely altruistic philanthropy. Their giving is core to their markets. How can we make that connection with girls for them?” Yet others hold that private sector motivations are completely separate from their corporate identities, and that they are driven by larger goals such as poverty reduction or global health.

For some respondents, this uncertainty carried a bit further, where private and corporate sector engagement was perceived as a potential challenge to some traditional areas of work and established ways of working. For example, several representatives from participating organizations mentioned their feeling that increased private sector support will likely emphasize girls’ economic roles and could, therefore, result in fewer investments for sexual and reproductive health, girls’ rights and challenging gender inequalities. This sense that newer private sector actors will influence the future direction of the girl field often underlined the need to understand more about them: as one person from a private foundation asked, “How can we...get corporate social responsibility people on board in a systematic way? They are really in a position to stir the pot [where girls are concerned].”

## ***B. Key Findings on Current Girl Work***

Much of this mapping exercise focused on building a better understanding of the types of girl policy and program work being undertaken in the field. Through the online survey and interviews, we were able to assemble a broad picture of the girl field and of some of the persistent challenges and emerging opportunities in working to advance girls.

As noted earlier in this document, we used a simple framework to organize activities benefiting girls. The framework used in this analysis includes four general areas: health, education, economic opportunities and general empowerment. All four of these areas are being addressed by the different participants of this study, as discussed above. We found that 50 of the 65 work in health, 48 in general empowerment, 42 in education, and 43 in economic empowerment. Interesting trends and gaps emerge when we break this overview down, looking at what is happening within each sector and across sectors. Our in-depth conversations with people engaged in girl policy and programming work also yielded several insights into the continuing challenges and opportunities in these areas.

***Finding 1: Current sectoral work on behalf of girls employs multiple strategies to tackle a range of issues.*** In conducting this mapping exercise, we wanted to learn more about the range and depth of interventions within each sector. At a summary level (presented earlier in this document), it was exciting to see that there is a relative evenness in the distribution of current girl work across the four different sectors—health, education, economics and

general empowerment. We deliberately probed further to see if this same evenness was evident within each sector with regard to depth and breadth of issues addressed. Here, again, we were generally surprised to see the results: although the situation varies by sector, and there are some common gaps across the girl field, the current body of girl work seems to encompass more diversity and depth than anticipated.

- **Issues within Health:** Efforts in the health sector emphasize sexual and reproductive health (SRH), with 39 groups working on sexual and reproductive health, 40 on HIV, 28 on safer motherhood, and 36 on youth-friendly services (see Table 6 below). This result is not surprising, given that SRH has been a traditional focus of girl programming and given the current funding environment for HIV and AIDS. Primary health and nutrition appear to be receiving the least attention in the health sector, highlighting the gap in programmatic responses for younger girls before they become sexually active. Since children, in general, often fall out of regular contact with public health services once they complete immunizations and before they access RH services, younger girls seem particularly underserved by current initiatives.

**Table 6: Work with Girls in the Health Sector**

Health	Total
Sexual and Reproductive Health	39
HIV and AIDS	42
Primary Health	26
Safe Motherhood	28
Nutrition	23
Youth Friendly Services	37
Other	20

*n=50 multiple responses permitted*

Groups responding with “other” areas of focused on topics as wide-ranging as abortion, sexual and gender-based violence, children in conflict, policy advocacy on harmful traditional practices, trafficking, and life skills training for teachers, parents and students. Every one of these is clearly of great importance to girls’ lives, yet each requires a distinct approach and set of activities. A number of the organizations also stressed the need for multi-sectoral approaches for achieving good health outcomes; for example, they note the connections between water supply, sanitation and school attendance for girls. Some of them work on the full range of issues themselves; others bring in partners to work in areas that are not their specialty.

- **Issues within General Empowerment:** Given the diverse range of issues contained within the category of “general empowerment” it is, perhaps, not surprising that we do not see as much overlap within this area. Groups addressing property and land rights may be tackling a very different set of issues, stakeholders and girls from a program that is building life skills. However, Table 7 clearly indicates that there are some important areas that are not receiving the same level of attention as others, such as civic rights and chore burden reduction.

**Table 7: Work with Girls in General Empowerment Sector**

General Empowerment	Total
Child Marriage	30
Life Skills	41
Reducing Burden of Chores	21
Property and Land Rights	15
Civic Rights (e.g., voting, identity cards)	18
Protection from Violence	39
Other	14

*n=48 multiple responses permitted*

There are some unifying patterns within this general empowerment domain, particularly with regard to mobilizing girls themselves, whether through advocacy training or by involving girls them in community projects, skill-building or educational activities. These organizations tended to emphasize the need to work with both girls and those who shape their context, providing life skills to girls who marry early, and public policy and community advocacy to prevent early marriage, for example, or reaching girls and young women with information but also training providers and promoting changes in norms and the law relating to contraception and abortion.

- **Issues within Education:** Organizations working on education for girls are likewise addressing several different access points for girls within the educational spectrum (see Table 8):

**Table 8: Work with Girls in the Education Sector**

Education	Total
Primary Education	31
Secondary Education	30
Tertiary or above	12
Educational Scholarships	15
Infrastructure (e.g., building schools, bathrooms for girls at schools)	20
Other	15

*n=42 multiple responses permitted*

While primary and secondary education receive the most attention, higher education and critical supports such as scholarships are also being addressed. This diversity of responses within the education sector is very evident when considering responses given under the “other” category, which include the alleviation of girls’ time burden carrying water, informal education involving girls and their mothers, the development of innovative curricula, litigation to ensure girls’ right to freedom from violence in schools and combating the expulsion from school of pregnant girls, and sex education for girls. With the advent of universal primary and secondary education in many countries, responses that ensure regular girl attendance or improve the quality of that education are increasingly important.

During the interviews, one researcher who is particularly recognized for her work on girls' education talked about how the “girl buzz” seems missing from education programs. In a review on education that she and her colleagues conducted, they searched for any programs that looked girl friendly or had a more deliberate focus on adolescence (as opposed to programs geared to children, or programs that extend adult literacy programs to children); unfortunately, their conclusion was that adolescent girls are still invisible within the education sector.

- **Issues within Economic Empowerment:** Economic empowerment is a relatively new topic on the girl agenda. Despite this, we found a surprising number of respondents already working in this area (see Table 9), with several organizations helping girls build critical skills and access financial services. In general, it does seem that much of the focus is on building capacity, and that there is less activity in creating jobs or links to markets for these girls once they are trained or have launched their businesses.

**Table 9: Work with Girls in the Economic Empowerment Sector**

Economic Empowerment	Total
Financial Literacy	29
Technical/Vocational Skills	28
Access to Micro-finance/Credit	29
Other Training/Skills	23
Job Placement (fulltime or internships/ apprenticeships)	15
Job Creation	16
Entrepreneurial Support	28
Linking to Job/Internship/Market Opportunities	25
Other	9

*n=43 multiple responses permitted*

Included as “other” activities are several niche approaches, such as orientation for girls to access informal savings and asset building, youth-led philanthropy and advocacy activities and conditional cash transfers for education.

- **Range of Strategies Used within Sectors:** To better understand the depth of current interventions in each sector, we also asked participants about the variety of strategies they employ in conducting their girl work. We created a menu of strategies for respondents to consider, from advocacy to monitoring and evaluation, as presented in Table 10 below:

As with earlier findings, there seems to be a good distribution of strategies being employed within each sector, particularly for health and general empowerment. On the one hand, it is heartening to see that organizations are using multiple approaches to support girls in each of these sectors—from policy work to program evaluation. At the same time, these results may speak to some duplication of effort, particularly in some areas like curriculum development. Education and economic empowerment sectors have some underused strategies, including policy work, community behavior change, research and evaluation—critical gaps which could prevent girls from accessing appropriate opportunities in their areas.

**Table 10: Strategies Adopted for Work in Each Sector**

Strategies Adopted for Work in Each Sector	Advocacy	Policy Work	Curriculum Development	Training	Service Delivery	Individual Behavior Change	Community Behavior Change	Research	Program Evaluation	Other
Health	36	27	33	35	28	35	30	25	27	9
General Empowerment	32	19	31	33	25	33	30	27	24	4
Education	25	17	26	26	21	24	27	15	21	6
Economic Empowerment	21	12	19	31	21	20	17	13	12	2

*n=65 multiple responses permitted*

**Finding 2: Girl-focused research and program monitoring and evaluation are lacking, despite increased attention to these elements across all sectors.** Many respondents noted that there seems to be a surge in commitment on the part of donors and implementers to conduct more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of girl programs. For example, each of the five programs in the large Adolescent Girl Initiative being funded through the World Bank, has a large, costly evaluation effort associated with it. These evaluations will take our understanding of complex girl programming to a higher level and will offer quality information for policymaking. Other donors, like the Nike Foundation for example, also commit substantial resources towards strong monitoring and evaluation of the programs it supports.

Despite this increased attention, the survey data show that there is a dip in activity across all sectors when it comes to research, monitoring and evaluation. This was reinforced during interviews with organizations of all types. Monitoring and evaluating (M&E) programs for effectiveness, in general, was a topic of concern raised by several interview respondents who felt that the evidence for determining where and how to invest in girls is spotty at best. Indeed, among the 65 organizations responding to the online survey, only 36 stated they use M&E in their work with girls. The range of programs that exist for girls has not been fully evaluated, and the best way to evaluate these programs is not entirely resolved. Should assessments compare the relative situation of boys and girls and remedially address girls when they are especially disadvantaged? Or should the arguments rest—as they appear to be focusing on now—on the multiple positive effects that investing in girls is expected to reap? And if so, should research be answering key operational questions about program feasibility, acceptability and impact?

A representative of a research organization noted that many questions are being asked about how to reach a given group of girls and whether programs are working. This insight was validated by almost all implementers that we interviewed, who highlighted the continued lack of information on best practices for girl work. Despite the well-documented case for strategic research and quality evaluations, they continue to lag behind due to a lack of a clear approach or adequate funding. Respondents noted that while there is some high quality research on girls, there largely exists a “hodge-podge” of information that can be hard to find and even harder to apply to their own work.

**Finding 3: Girl work often cuts across sectors, creating the possibility of more holistic responses for girls.** Few organizations limit themselves to work in only one sector. Given that respondents were free to indicate all sectors that they worked in, it became evident from the survey data that multi-sectoral approaches for girls are underway. One caveat to this is that organizations were responding to their global programs for girls; it may be that at a project level, these interactions are less evident. Regardless of potential limitations, the high level of engagement in multiple sectors provides a good foundation for more holistic activities on behalf of girls.

In Table 11 below, we began exploring this issue by looking to see if there is cross-sector work underway for girls. While the table does not present a full picture of work in multiple sectors, it does at least begin to lay out the level of interaction between sectors, and in general, the overlap of work between sectors is far greater and more consistent than expected. For example, of the 50 respondents who have a health focus, 45 of them also work towards the general empowerment of girls, 38 in education and 40 in economic empowerment. This suggests that the majority of actors who work to improve girls' health also engage in at least one other sector through the course of their girl work.

**Table 11: Interaction between Sectors of Girl Work**

Interaction between Sectors of Girl Work	Health	General Empowerment	Education	Economic Empowerment
Health (n=50)	50	45	38	40
General Empowerment (n=48)	45	48	41	40
Education (n=42)	38	41	42	37
Economic Empowerment (n=43)	40	40	37	43

*multiple responses permitted*

Of the four sectors presented, general empowerment was most likely to be addressed within the context of other programs, particularly overlapping with health. This perhaps reflects the fact that several common components of girl work, such as addressing life skills, fall within the “general empowerment” category. Even with sectors where one might have expected less interaction, such as education and economic empowerment, many respondents indicated that they work in both areas.

Multiple comments made during the interviews reinforced the sense that holistic or multi-sectoral programs for girls should be the emphasis of future programming for girls. As one respondent from a private foundation said: “How many shining examples are there of [girls'] problems being tackled simultaneously? The tendency is to choose a simple intervention in one sector. Change could occur more rapidly and be more lasting for girls if there were more holistic programming occurring at the community level. Just a few years of school is not going to solve the problem.”

Numerous organizations of all varieties also described moving away from more “traditional” ways of working with girls and embracing new areas of work, such as economic empowerment, maternal mortality and secondary education. For example, conditional cash transfer programs are a new area of investment, with implications that straddle multiple sectors.

A representative from a donor institution noted that the increase in conditional cash transfers reflects recognition of the potential impact of putting more money into girls' hands and the broader impact these schemes can have.

With the growing interest in economic empowerment initiatives for girls, the importance of keeping these efforts linked to other aspects of a girl's life was raised by several interviewees. Increases in livelihoods work, for example, appears to lack any interface with a relevant education. One researcher we interviewed emphasized that it is a mistake to think about livelihoods work that takes place entirely apart from the education system since education is so relevant. Rather than moving outside the educational arena, livelihoods players need to move right *inside* the education system.

**Finding 4: There is tension within the girl arena between “traditional” and “new” areas of intervention.** As noted previously in this report, the current landscape for girls includes many “traditional” areas of work, such as education and reproductive health, as well as “newer” approaches, particularly those related to the economic empowerment of girls. Comments made by several interviewees revealed that there is a great deal of internal debate and tension around the balance the old and the new. While no one discounted the value of all approaches for girls, the tension seems to stem from perceived philosophical differences and from competition for scarce development resources. Without hard data on how much is invested in each type of programming for girls, it is difficult to determine whether these perceptions are accurate or not. The following section presents some of the debates that are underway:

- **Economic Empowerment vs. Other Issues:** Several respondents raised the point that the new emphasis on economic empowerment may be drawing attention, resources and action away from other important areas of girls' lives. Implementers, researchers and donors noted that economic empowerment programs in particular have received much greater attention and investment in recent years than other sectors. The challenge of focusing specifically on girls' economic roles is that such programs need to work with older girls who are capable of being economic players and also require a legal and regulatory environment that permits girls' access to financial resources. One consequence of an emphasis on economic empowerment on its own may be the relative neglect of other aspects of girls' lives, particularly those that impact younger girls, such as education and gender norms in the home.
- **Neutral Sectors Create a “Safer” Ground for Girl Work:** While some respondents were concerned that newer areas of work are taking attention away from traditional girl issues, others noted that more neutral sectors, such as education and economic empowerment, may create new entry points for girl programming. Linking sectors like health and economic empowerment may open up dialogue on and programmatic responses to more controversial topics.

The emphasis on economic empowerment is perceived by a number respondents as occurring to the detriment of sexual and reproductive health work for girls, since the latter is more controversial and the new donors are perceived to be reluctant to put money toward such services. However, some respondents also noted that by putting the focus on a relatively neutral topic like economic empowerment, there were opportunities to include other, more sensitive issues, under that umbrella. For example, one research group that has been very focused on gender and sexuality education noted that the

economic empowerment-related work had incorporated the “safe space” concept. This broader way of thinking about girls opens up a constructive dialogue around sexuality and reproductive health, areas in which politics have undermined programming. In another example of this, a different respondent noted that those working in the education sector can readily see that sexuality is at the core of what makes it hard to be a girl or a boy, so this may be a good moment to think more holistically about what young people need.

- **Tackling Social and Gender Norms:** Not all players are willing to challenge the gender inequalities and other social constraints to girls’ lives. It remains to be seen how far development players are willing to work to challenge the “disabling environment”—the power relations that limit girls’ prospects. An implementer interviewed noted to the fact that girl work enthusiasts do not always take into account the importance of gender norms and girls’ social relationships with others. These realities underscore the need focus not only on girls, but also to work with men and boys, fathers and other family members, partners, male students and others.

**Finding 5: Girl-defined and led programs are few and far between.** Girls themselves are in general not involved in planning or leading programs that are meant to shape their lives. One respondent who works with a Latin American group pointed out that despite the large numbers of women’s organizations and NGOs working on behalf of young women, they rarely allow young women leadership within the programs. Respondents from women’s

*“...It is important to encourage young women to create their own organizations and lead efforts on behalf of girls.”*

—Implementing organization representative

advocacy groups in particular observed that there is a tendency to design things for girls without talking to them, sometimes reflecting a sense of “we were young once, we know what they need.” Instead, respondents maintained strongly that girls and young women need to be included in designing these programs. While proponents of this approach believe that initiatives designed and run by young

women themselves are the most effective and innovative at reaching other young women, few frameworks exist for how this should be done. So much of what needs to happen is shaped by social, political context of the present day, and can change substantially between generations.

Respondents who raised this general issue also noted that girl-led initiatives should maintain a total focus on the benefits to girls themselves. As one person wrote in our online survey, there is a trend toward “development interventions that mobilize young women in the pursuit of broad development outcomes.” While the benefits to others provide an important justification for investing in girls, this argument is also problematic because girls have so little and are owed so much; their efforts should be mobilized on their own behalf, not on behalf of others.



## C. Key Findings on the Investment Environment for Girl Work

The in-depth interviews gave us an opportunity to understand more about the current and potential investment environment for girls in developing countries. Across the board, respondents acknowledged the increased visibility of girls as part of the global development discourse. However, they varied in their opinions as to whether this visibility has or will translate into future attention and investments for girls. Respondents also identified several continuing challenges or gaps in girl investments, often related to the approach or terms that donors set.

### ***Finding 1: Despite widespread recognition of the increased “buzz” around girl work, respondents are unsure whether this increased interest in girls is translating into real investments.***

This mapping exercise was driven by the increased attention of girls, as an attempt to understand where this attention has led the field to date. We were, therefore, very interested to hear how different actors in the girl arena were perceiving and responding to the “girl buzz.” The prevailing sense seems to be one of cautious optimism—that the energy and momentum is there, but that tangible difference in terms of investments and resources being directed at girls has yet to materialize.

- **Girls Are on the Agenda:** In our interviews, both donors and implementers acknowledged the increased attention by the larger development community on girls and girl-related issues. Girls are on the agenda at the World Economic Forum; the Clinton Global Initiative; the World Bank; the Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty, and there are also new resources focused on girls via [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org) and a series of new publications from diverse organizations. Respondents recognized the girl momentum and see the positive role this has had in attracting new stakeholders and investments on behalf of girls.

The experts we interviewed believe that the situation of girls and the solutions to their problems will be *the* next major issue in international development. Several drew attention to the explosion of private sector philanthropic interest in girls that has taken place in the United States and increasingly in Europe. Our respondents suggested several reasons for this: 1. the cause of girls has emotional resonance, touching corporate staff as well as the consumer base; and 2. working with girls is viewed as far less controversial—at least in the form the public messaging has taken—and is not as difficult as addressing women’s rights or reproductive health, neither of which corporations want to be involved in. The case has been made—with evidence that speaks to the head, the heart, or both—that investing in girls will bring a significant return on investment, especially in girls’ education. There is the sense of significant momentum around adolescent girls, and perhaps even some fear of it all dying out without taking advantage of it.

- **But Are Girls in the Budget?:** Despite the excitement of the girl “buzz,” a lingering skepticism exists with regard to all of the attention on girls. Some basic questions remain about this recent surge in attention on girls: *Is the attention more than the result of a feel-good public relations interlude? Is there real spending, and if so, what has the change in annual spending been? Has this led to an increase in the number or scale of programs for girls? What is the magnitude of efforts for girls, and what impact do we expect to see by when?* Donors and implementers have been watching closely to see how the attention has or has not translated into real, meaningful, large-scale investments on the ground.

Part of the challenge, as noted earlier in this document, is the lack of good data on just how much is being invested in girls and how those investments are being used.

Interestingly, donors seemed more skeptical, saying that there is no real definition of the need in real dollar terms, *and* that what has been invested so far is just a drop in the bucket. Their take is that there are signs of good interest, and some pioneering players who are doing some innovative investing. Some donors newly aware of the situation of girls have made verbal commitments of various kinds. Investments by a few players, a few

***“Given the potential return on investment in girls, we are barely on the map.... nothing is big enough in scale and scope to really change the game.”***

—Private sector donor

donors, and a few big NGOs have increased marginally, but until the large private and bilateral and multilateral donors change the way they do business, there is a long way left to go.

Implementers and researchers seem more optimistic, in several instances of each noting that resources and research have increased “exponentially.” This may reflect

a divergent perspective on what “scale” and “scope” mean to a donor versus an implementer. Indeed, one private sector donor sees women’s advocates as limited by small-scale thinking, and believes many advocates should raise their expectations. One research organization sees the growth in research on girls as falling especially in the HIV arena, while acknowledging a growth in programming overall.

***Finding 2: Fundamental differences in donor approaches influence the girl agenda and create challenges within the girl arena.***

The convergence of traditional donors and newer, girl-focused “donor advocates” within the adolescent girl field may be adding to a lack of coordination felt within this arena. The philosophical and practical differences in approaches results in some basic questions for the girl work field going forwards. For example, in most places, the disadvantages faced by girls should shape whether investments are made solely in girls. But if donors already come with a sense that they cannot invest solely in girls, what are the implications for this work?

Given the generally supportive environment, we heard a great deal from respondents about the different approaches and motivations of those who fund girl work. Donors vary in their approach and philosophy to girl programming, from those that include girls as part of a larger umbrella to others who are more “girl centric.” Much of this came from the donor representatives themselves, who note that the recent attention on girl issues is pushing them to think and re-think the nature of their own involvement in the girl arena. For some donors, perhaps the more traditional organizations, girls are seen as an important sub-set within a larger group, such as youth. Shifting to an exclusive focus on girls as a strategy to support them poses both philosophical and practical questions. For some such donors, having the focus on girls denies the reality of their situation that is often dependent on their relationships with others, such as her parents or her brothers. For others, it is important to stress that both boys and girls merit equal attention. One donor wondered aloud whether it makes more sense strategically to emphasize the increased effectiveness of working with girls versus the fairness of remedially focusing on girls, since boys also require considerable attention. Several respondents in our in-depth interviews questioned the wisdom of focusing exclusively on girls, with some mentioning the possibility of backlash against girls at all levels.

Other donors, particularly those whose entire purpose is to support girls, bring a more aggressive girl-centric focus to the issues they promote and the work they fund. Several organizations referred to the role that some of these newer donors play in helping to bring other donors, particularly from the private sector, to work on behalf of girls. The Nike Foundation in particular was described as this type of “activist donor,” different from others in taking the messaging role very seriously. Rather than simply supporting programs, Nike has persuaded new private sector donors to commit more wholeheartedly to the cause of girls. Their messaging is readily accessible and reaches out to the ordinary person and to people’s emotions, and it has increased public awareness of girls enormously. Girls are a common topic of media ads and messaging through all sorts of media as a consequence of Nike Foundation and others’ public awareness raising.

**Finding 3: There is a significant disconnect between how organizations are structured and where the girl agenda hopes to go.** Donors are often constrained by the way they are structured as organizations and as funding agents. The same is true for the range of actors that implement policy and programs on behalf of girls. This has definite implications for where and how far the girl field can go, placing real limits on the nature and scale of programming that can be undertaken. Many respondents said that some investments need to be solely girl-focused to ensure that proper attention and responses are undertaken. But for some donors, it is not possible to channel funding in such a way. While several interviewees

mentioned the need for multi-sectoral responses for girls, they also acknowledged that it can be very difficult to find a donor willing to fund such efforts and organizations with the capacity to implement across multiple areas. Other noted the need for long-term projects that also allow for measuring impact across different areas of a girl’s—ultimately, a woman’s—life. Again, respondents raised the challenge of finding funds to support this. Even the relatively straightforward

issue of having common terms, ages, and definitions for girls that would facilitate measurement of investments and impact across programs is problematic.

Respondents highlighted a number of structural barriers that impede donors and implementers from long-term investments in holistic programming for girls:

- **Lost in the Crowd:** As noted earlier, girls often fall within a larger demographic group—such as youth or women—and do not always have a clear home of their own. As such, girls fall between the cracks in decisions about investment and implementation. Programs for women address the specific needs of girls incidentally; similarly, programs for youth address the specific needs of girls incidentally. Funding and program support for these larger demographic groups may already be set, leaving little room or flexibility to take on girl-specific projects. One bilateral donor gave an example of how girls get lost within other categories: “[Work on youth often addresses] the overall issues of youth without necessarily immediately having the gender lens on it. [Those of us interested in reproductive health] tend to become interested in females when they become of reproductive age. Once they are menstruating then we are not thinking about their age so much. But when we are thinking about providing services, we are mostly thinking about women.”

*“There is awareness about the needs of girls, but the way we organize ourselves to address the needs of women and girls leaves something to be desired.”*

—Bilateral donor

- **Inflexible Structures:** Another structural barrier is the vertical nature of donor and implementer programming, which limits the potential for efforts that bridge across multiple sectors. One respondent pointed out that key drivers of the development agenda, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reinforce the vertical structure of programs. However, another major multilateral development agency emphasized the MDGs as a starting point for working with girls, especially in the education and health sectors. While both arguments have merit, the underlying structures for many girl actors are vertical, thereby impeding long-term, holistic girl programming.

Even if organizations philosophically embrace a more holistic response to addressing girl issues globally, their funding, decision-making and program support structures may not allow for this. Several respondents noted the challenge of finding a donor who will fund and coordinate along the “girl dimension,” and then finding an implementer capable of receiving multi-sectoral funding. One large implementing agency described the joys and challenges of working across multiple sectors, with the goal of focusing more on “impact groups,” and less on sectors. They have recognized the need for larger, longer-term programs through which they make 10-15 year commitments to communities, an approach that has forced them to think more holistically. But this appears to be the exception to the norm for girl-related initiatives.

Working with girls necessarily means that some of the most meaningful impacts may not be seen for years. Thus, in addition to being multi-sectoral, programs would ideally have sufficient time to address critical issues and measure change. Here, again, donors are often unable to make such investments.

***Finding 4: A major challenge to scaling up work with girls is getting governments to take up their cause.*** One significant player missing from this mapping exercise, and, unfortunately, from the general global girl arena, are governments. Some implementers noted that the recent research and advocacy for girls has been helpful in making the case for girl work in a compelling, attractive and universally relevant way. But the questions remains, what are governments—national and local—really doing on behalf of girls? Representatives from advocacy and research groups have more to say: adolescents are one age group that governments have no concept of or no interest in. At the political level, politicians often do not want to be responsible for legislation or budgets to provide any services that might be controversial. Others note that the sector-specific way that governments are structured (e.g., education, labor, health, etc.)—in terms of budgeting for and implementing policies—often relegates girls to a “catch-all” ministry for women, youth, gender, culture and/or sports, with few resources and limited clout to execute programs of depth or scale.

One research organizations noted that some excellent reproductive health policies exist in a number of countries, but that, despite the idealistic language, what is happening on the ground is very difficult to determine. Policies are established that can directly contradict one another, like statements of universal access to services and age-related restrictions to those services.

The United Nations system provides a structure to advocate with governments on behalf of girls. However, as a donor stated, no one seems to register the fact that adolescents currently constitute the largest generation of young people ever. The MDGs do not even explicitly acknowledge that one-third of the world's population is adolescents, a significant demographic group that warrants greater government attention and resources. Yet the perception of several advocacy and research groups is that adolescents in general and girls in particular are orphans within the UN system. At the same time, others point out that the UN is working to address this by forming a joint-agency task force and by developing joint programs for adolescent girls.

## Cross-Cutting Findings

The previous sections presented key findings for each of the three main themes explored through the mapping exercise: the actors, the work and the investment environment. At the same time, there were some broader findings that cut across these three areas.

- **Seize the Moment:** Across the board, people working in the girl arena appreciate the momentum that has been generated and feel that this is the time to push forward to invest in more programs that reach more girls. This is clearly an exciting time for individuals and organizations working in the field of girls. There is genuine sense that this is a pivotal moment for girl work and that the potential for mobilizing resources, actors and ideas on behalf of girls has never been greater.
- **More than Just the Girl:** The vast majority of groups focus on the people and institutions in girls' environments, not just on the girls themselves. Several organizations described their own agendas as having evolved clearly in a more comprehensive direction, often working with groups other than girls. Indeed, when we asked interviewees what sorts of lessons they were learning about working with girls, a remarkable consistency emerged in their emphasis on working with others in girls' lives. Donors and implementers talked about working with members of the community, gatekeepers (especially when girls cannot make critical decisions for themselves), positive female role models, parents, teachers and school administrators. They and the field in general are recognizing that they cannot work with girls in isolation of the broader context.
- **Persistent Information Gaps:** There are persistent information gaps that make understanding the girl arena a challenge. Even with this limited mapping effort that has focused on larger, more experienced girl actors, we encountered challenges in obtaining clear, consistent information across organizations and, even, within organizations. Variations in how organizations classify girls (the different labels and age ranges, for example), categorize work, track resources, and assign girl work responsibility all hamper efforts to measure how much is being invested in how many girls with what impact. Efforts to establish some consistency around these key factors would help build understanding in what the current girl arena includes and where it needs to go in the future.

- **Lack of Coordination:** Little collaboration is evident among organizations working on behalf of girls, which can lead to “random” investments that fail to build on past efforts. Organizations working with overlapping objectives and activities work in relative isolation. Across the board, respondents highlighted the lack of coordination between actors and the need to avoid randomness in these efforts. The main basis for this concern is that organizations have numerous and diverse reasons for engaging in girl work, which in turn shapes their work in very different ways.

# Considerations Going Forward

Given the data, insights and findings presented above, we have identified several ideas and issues that should be considered by all girl stakeholders as they strive to advance the field. These considerations are grouped into two areas or “themes”: the first focuses on the coordination of those organizations who work on behalf of girls and strengthening the work that they undertake; the second proposes some shifts in the investment environment that could improve the overall girl landscape and the impact for girls.

## *Theme 1: Coordinating the Actors, Strengthening the Programs*

There is still much work to be done to translate interest in girls into more systematic investments, whether by getting worthy programs scaled up or creating policies that foster their expansion. At the heart of this effort is the issue of greater coordination between actors. How can improved coordination between the ever-growing numbers of players contribute to strengthening and expanding global commitment to adolescent girls? What might we suggest are some early agenda items for this coalition of organizations?

- **Create a social networking site for implementing organizations, donors, researchers and advocates:** To take better advantage of the diverse pool of talent and commitment currently engaged in girl work, it is critical to provide a venue—such as a web-based, interactive social networking site—where organizations can provide updates, share best practices and disseminate resources. Such a networking site could:
  - Host a continuously updated/renewed database of organizations working on behalf of girls at all levels;
  - Promote more consistent concepts and definitions, so that information on what is happening can be analyzed more easily, giving a clearer sense of what is happening in the girl work field;
  - Provide a platform for sharing evidence on what is happening in the girl programming arena, so that groups can build on each others’ work more effectively;
  - Create and re-energize platforms for collaboration and advocacy;
  - Facilitate the development of a more coherent strategy for work to benefit girls.



- **Establish donor and funding priorities:** The problem of the “randomness” in girl investments calls for a field-wide or sector-wide approach (SWAp<sup>5</sup>) with donors to set priorities for funding girl initiatives. Priorities should consider specific sectors or approaches, but also multi-sectoral or cross-cutting initiatives. While such coordination will be challenging to create, the results would be dramatic—both in terms of implementation, as well as impact.
- **Develop an overarching strategy for girls:** Given that there is no “girl sector,” nor is there likely to be anytime soon, the actors involved in girl work—including governments—need to take the initiative and develop a strategy that moves the field forward. With the variety of organizations and perspectives involved, it may be that international donors are best positioned to play a coordinating role at a global level. For example, the United Nation’s Adolescent Girls Task Force might be well-suited to bring together other donors, governments and implementers and move a strategy forward. At a country level, it may be that more of a “sector-wide approach” is needed, much as, for example, donors have collaborated with each other and with governments to establish a division of labor to strengthen the health sector. The strategy development process should build off of some of the considerations noted above, in terms of tapping a network of organizations and keeping donor and funding priorities in mind.
- **Take programs to scale:** Programs are making great strides, but these need to be implemented on a much larger scale to have lasting impact on the lives of girls. Based on the efforts shared by those organizations participating in this exercise, programs for girls are more ambitious than ever, addressing a broad range of areas critical to the advancement of girls. However, much work for girls is taking place through relatively small-scale programs, not through major changes in how education and health systems function and infrastructure is built up. The leadership and investment of governments in scaling up programs will be critical.
- **Consolidate and strengthen the evidence base for girl work:** There is a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise within the girl arena on what works and does not work for girls. A first step for building an accessible evidence base is to centralize existing research, evaluations and lessons learned. This could be done via the same social networking venue described earlier. The girl community could then better define additional evidence needed to strengthen policy and program responses and better work with donors to invest in strategic new research and evaluations. Long-term investment in research and program/policy evaluation should also be made available to fill in some of the chronic gaps in our understanding of what ultimately impacts different girls’ lives.

## **Theme 2: Shifting the Investment Environment**

In addition to coordinating the different players who invest in and implement efforts on behalf of girls, there are some steps that can be taken to shift the overall landscape so that it is better positioned to support effective programming for girls.

- **Continue to build the case for girl-focused investments:** While much ground has been gained, there is still need to continue debating and demonstrating the need for girl programming. Some questions persist: *Why girls only? What about the boys? Do we always need to carve out girl-specific space within youth or women’s programs?* Open dialogue on these issues—bringing in the diverse perspectives contained within the girl arena—will, ultimately, help move the field forward.

- **Foster multi-sectoral programming and collaboration:** The investment environment for girls needs to encourage and reward approaches that bring actors together to address multiple facets of a girl's life. Donors' flexibility and coordination would be a first step in this process, but implementing organizations similarly must be ready and willing to undertake such ventures.
- **Track real spending on girls:** Given the difficulties in knowing just what is being channeled towards girls, the field needs to find a way to calculate real spending on behalf of girls. It may sound trite, but "following the money" is the best way to understand societal priorities and identify gaps in girl-focused initiatives.
- **Build the capacity of girls to lead and act on their own behalf:** Girls know best what will or will not work for them. Their capacity and leadership in girl-programming needs to be encouraged and supported by donors, governments and implementers.

## Endnotes

1. Levine, Ruth, Cynthia B. Lloyd, Margaret Greene, and Caren Grown (2008) *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development
2. Plan International (2009) *Because I am a Girl, the State of the World's Girl 2009: Girls in the Global Economy*. London, Plan International
3. Levine, Ruth, Cynthia B. Lloyd, Margaret Greene, and Caren Grown (2008) *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development
4. Eitel, Maria. 2009. BLOG: "At CGI and Beyond, World Leaders Say Girls Are the Key to Progress." Thursday, October 01. The Huffington Post (U.S.).
5. See, for example, the explanation here: <http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/sector-wide-approaches-swaps/what-is-a-swap>

# Appendix 1: Online Survey

## **Background**

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), with support from the United Nations Foundation (UN Foundation), is mapping programs, policies, and donors that support the empowerment and well-being of adolescent girls in the developing world. The purpose of this mapping exercise is to showcase the advances that have been made in addressing the needs of adolescent girls and to enhance the sharing of ideas and strengthen adolescent girl programming.

The UN Foundation may ask to feature your organization on their website space devoted to adolescent girls. The Foundation's goal is ultimately to increase communication and information sharing of existing work related to girls in developing countries.

We have identified your organization for inclusion in the mapping project and would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few moments to complete the following survey. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes.

## **Survey**

### **Section 1: Background**

1. Name of Organization
2. Does your organization currently work directly with girls? (i.e., as a target group/beneficiary) (Y, N)
3. Does the work of your organization benefit girls indirectly? (e.g., working with mothers on better nutritional practices) (Y, N)
4. Does your organization currently fund projects that work with girls or address the challenges they face? (Y/N)
5. If you answered yes to any of the previous questions, please skip to next page.

If you answered no on all of the previous questions, is your organization interested in working with girls? (Y/N)

**Section 2: Approaches to working with girls.**

1. In your organizations work with adolescent girls, does your organization address any of the following issues? Please select all relevant fields.

- Timing and/or characteristics of marriage
- Timing and/or characteristics of childbearing
- Education
- Reducing the burden of chores
- Health
- Economic empowerment and opportunities
- Protection from violence

2. More specifically, which of the following HEALTH program areas does your organization work in with adolescent girls and what type of work does your organization do? Please select all relevant fields in the following matrices.

	Advocacy	Policy work (at what level? Local, National, Intnl)	Curriculum Development	Training	Service Delivery	Individual Behavior Change	Community/ Social Norm Change	Research	Program Evaluations	Other
<b>HEALTH</b>										
Sexual and RH										
HIV and AIDS										
Primary Health										
Safe motherhood										
Nutrition										
Youth Friendly Services										
Other (TEXT BOX)										

3. More specifically, which of the following GENERAL EMPOWERMENT program areas does your organization work in with adolescent girls and what type of work does your organization do? Please select all relevant fields in the following matrices.

<b>GENERAL EMPOWERMENT</b>	Advocacy	Policy work (at what level? Local, National, Intnl)	Curriculum Development	Training	Service Delivery	Individual Behavior Change	Community/ Social Norm Change	Research	Program Evaluations	Other
Child Marriage										
Life Skills										
Reducing burden of chores										
Property & Land Rights										
Civic rights (e.g. voting, identity cards)										
Protection from violence										
Other (TEXT BOX)										

4. More specifically, which of the following EDUCATION program areas does your organization work in with adolescent girls and what type of work does your organization do? Please select all relevant fields in the following matrices.

<b>EDUCATION</b>	Advocacy	Policy work (at what level? Local, National, Intnl)	Curriculum Development	Training	Service Delivery	Individual Behavior Change	Community/ Social Norm Change	Research	Program Evaluations	Other
Primary Education										
Secondary Education										
Tertiary or above										
Educational Scholarships										
Infrastructure (e.g., building schools; bathrooms for girls at schools)										
Other (TEXT BOX)										

5. More specifically, which of the following ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT program areas does your organization work in with adolescent girls and what type of work does your organization do? Please select all relevant fields in the following matrices.

<b>ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT</b>	Advocacy	Policy work (at what level? Local, National, Intnl)	Curriculum Development	Training	Service Delivery	Individual Behavior Change	Community/ Social Norm Change	Research	Program Evaluations	Other
Financial Literacy										
Technical/Vocation										
Access to micro-finance/ credit										
Other Training/Skills (please explain) (TEXT BOX)										
Job Placement (fulltime or internships/ apprenticeships)										
Job Creation										
Entrepreneurial Support										
Linking to job/internship/ market opportunities										
Other (TEXT BOX)										

### **Section 3: Gender Approach**

1. Does your organization address gender in its work with adolescent girls? (Y/N)
2. If so, how would you characterize your approach?
  - Gender Neutral
  - Gender Sensitive
  - Gender Transformative
  - Any other classification you think is more descriptive

### **Section 4: Geographical Range**

1. Where do you work with girls?
  - Latin America & Caribbean
  - Middle East and North Africa
  - West Africa
  - East Africa
  - Southern Africa
  - South Asia
  - Southeast Asia & Pacific

- East Asia
- Europe
- North America

2. If possible, please list countries where your organization works with adolescent girls

### **Section 5: Profile of Adolescent Girls:**

1. How does your organization define adolescent girls? For example, by age, by stage in life cycle
2. What age girls does your organization work with? Please select all relevant fields. (under 10; 10-12; 13-15; 16-19; 20-24)
3. What is the marital status of the adolescent girls your organization works with? Please select all relevant fields. (married, unmarried, cohabitating)
4. Does your organization work with adolescent girls who are mothers? (Y/N)
5. What is the level of education of the adolescent girls your organization works with? Please select all relevant fields. (primary, secondary, tertiary)
6. In what setting does your organizations work with adolescent girls take place? Please select all relevant fields. (Urban/Rural)
7. Does your organization work with adolescent girls of a certain race or ethnic minority? If so, please explain (TEXT BOX)
8. Does your organization work with at-risk adolescent girls? If so, please explain. (TEXT BOX)
9. What are other socio-demographic characteristics relevant for describing the adolescent girls your organization works with? (TEXT BOX)

### **Section 6: Girls' Environment**

1. Do you engage with people who influence adolescent girls on a daily basis? (Y/N)
2. If yes, who do you work with?
  - Mothers
  - Fathers
  - Guardians
  - Brothers
  - Sisters
  - Other family members
  - Teachers
  - Religious Leaders
  - Employers
  - Health Care Providers
  - Community Orgs/Networks (e.g., Girl Guides)
  - Other (TEXT BOX)



### **Section 7: Organizational Background**

1. How many years ago did your organization begin working with adolescent girls?  
(TEXT BOX)
2. What prompted or motivated your organization to begin working with adolescent girls?  
(TEXT BOX)
3. Does your organization position its work with adolescent girls in relation to any of these frameworks? By framework we mean the conceptual approach that characterizes your work with adolescent girls. Please select all relevant fields.
  - Rights-based approach
  - Global public health framework
  - Economic based
  - Political
  - Other (TEXT BOX)
4. Does working with adolescent girls contribute to your organizational mission or overall mandate? (Y/N)  
  
If yes, how? (TEXT BOX)
5. Currently, what proportion of your organization's total program work would you estimate is dedicated to addressing the needs of girls or working directly with adolescent girls?  
(TEXT BOX)
6. Roughly, what proportion of your current project budget is dedicated to work with adolescent girls? (e.g. less than 5%, 5-10%, 50%) (TEXT BOX)
7. Does your organization use the Internet to disseminate your work and/or engage others in it? (Y/N)
8. If yes, in what way? If you have a website, please provide the URL for the adolescent girl specific program pages. (TEXT BOX)

### **Section 8: Partnerships**

1. Who are the main funders of your work with girls? (or who do you fund?) (TEXT BOX)
2. With which government ministries in developing countries do you work (i.e., Health, Education, Finance)? In all countries where you work or some? (TEXT BOX)
3. With which other partners do you engage in your work with adolescent girls?? (TEXT BOX)
4. Which groups do you think are the most effective and innovative in reaching adolescent girls?? (TEXT BOX)
5. Are there any particularly promising approaches or innovative programs with adolescent girls that you would like to highlight? (TEXT BOX)

### **Section 9: Challenges**

1. What are some of the barriers or challenges you face in your work with adolescent girls in your specific context? Economic/social/cultural/programmatic? (TEXT BOX)
2. Has your organization been able to address some of these barriers or challenges? (Y/N)  
If yes, how? (Text box)
3. Do you incorporate monitoring and evaluation to track the effects with your work with adolescent girls? (Y/N)  
If yes, are you willing to share some of your findings, tools and/or methods? (Y/N)

### **Section 10: Conclusion**

1. We would like to follow up with a few organizations who work with girls. If your organization is identified, would you be willing to participate in a more in-depth 20-30 minute phone interview? (Y/N)
2. Thank you for completing the survey! If any follow up questions emerge from your responses to the survey, who is the appropriate person at your organization to contact?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 2: Survey Respondents

## *Donors*

American Jewish World Service	NoVo Foundation
CDC Zimbabwe	Packard Foundation
CDC Ethiopia	Standard Chartered Bank
CDC GAP-Nigeria	United Nations Foundation
CDC-China	United Nations Population Fund
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation	UNGEI
Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres	UNICEF
Fundación Puntos de Encuentro	UNIFEM
Global Fund for Women	USAID
International Youth Foundation	USAID Namibia
Nike Foundation	Voss Foundation

## *Advocacy Organizations*

Association for Women's Rights in Development	Global Action for Children
Basic Education Coalition	International Women's Health Coalition
Center for Reproductive Rights (International Legal Program only)	One By One
Equality Now	Room to Read
General Board of Church & Society, United Methodist Church	SCHOOL GIRLS UNITE
	SIECUS
	Tahiri Justice Center

## ***Program Implementers***

The Academy for Educational Development, International Rescue Committee (IRC)  
Center for Gender Equity Ipas  
Aflatoun MercyCorps  
CARE Pact  
Camfed International PATH  
Education Development Center Pathfinder International  
EngenderHealth Plan International  
Freedom from Hunger Save the Children Federation, Inc.  
Gestos—HIV+, Communication and Gender Issues Winrock International  
Girl Scouts of USA World Learning  
Global Girlfriend World Population Foundation  
International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region World Vision  
World Wildlife Fund

## ***Research Organizations***

Centre for Social Research Population Council  
Guttmacher Institute University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
International Health Programs/Public Health Institute The Urban Institute  
Kishoree Kontha Project, Poverty Action Lab (MIT) and Save the Children USA

## Appendix 3: Organizations and Individuals Interviewed

The Academy for Educational Development, Center for Gender Equity  
Advocates for Youth  
Association for Women in Development  
CARE  
Central American Women's Fund/ Central American Women's Connection  
Equality Now  
Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres  
Guttmacher Institute  
Independent Consultant (1)  
International Women's Health Coalition  
Nike Foundation  
Pathfinder  
Plan International  
Population Council  
Room to Read  
Standard Chartered Foundation  
United Nations Foundation  
USAID (multiple interviews conducted)  
Voss Foundation  
World Bank  
World Wildlife Fund



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