

Because I am a Girl

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S GIRLS 2009

Girls in the Global Economy: Adding It All Up



There are 500 MILLION adolescent girls in the developing world – the same as the entire population of the European Union – whose economic potential is wasted.



Are you a girl or young woman growing up in the 21st Century? Or perhaps you are a boy with a sister or friend who is?

Plan's latest 'Because I am a Girl' report looks at how girls and young women, just like you or your female relatives, fit into the global economy. The report questions the current state of girls' economic lives and their working conditions, experiences and opportunities. It tells us that all over the world, girls are being treated unfairly and they're not getting the same chance as boys do to fulfil their dreams. At every stage of a girl's life, from infancy to young adulthood, she faces obstacles just because she is a girl. These obstacles, from having to spend a great deal of time looking after relatives to being pulled out of school when families fall on hard times, are preventing girls from reaching their full potential and getting a chance to contribute to their communities.



“Investing in girls is the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do.”

Ngozi Oknojo-Iweala,
Managing Director of the World Bank.



Front Cover:
Geeta Choudhary, who was sold into domestic service by her family when she was 12. Plan's kamalari abolition program rescued Geeta and provided her with a loan to open her own roadside café. She now makes 46 times what she used to earn as a domestic servant.

Photographer: Alf Berg

How do Girls fit in the Global Economy?

21st century **globalisation*** has transformed all our lives. Although globalisation has opened up more job opportunities, it has also had negative effects on the working lives of girls. Young women and girls are experiencing long and difficult working days in factories, production lines and in jobs which are usually considered 'men's work'. Girls are seen as cheap labour as they carry out exhausting work for long hours and low pay.

Why Invest in Girls...

The report shows that investing in girls is a smart move as girls spend their wages well.

Young women put back 90% of their income into their household, but men only give back 30-40%. By directing the money they earn back into the household, girls can help their families to stay healthy, secure and educated. By involving girls in the economy on a national level, countries can make sure more families get out of the poverty trap.

....and why NOW?

Now more than ever before, it is essential to focus on girls in the global economy. The recent global economic crisis (the recession) has hit girls harder than any other group.

How has the recession affected girls in your country? If they are still going to school, remain in good physical and mental health, then they have not felt the negative effects of the crisis. But countless other girls have not been so lucky.

These are some of the ways in which girls have been affected by the global financial crisis:

- It was estimated that in 2009 alone an additional 50,000 African babies would die before their first birthday. Most of them would be girls. (World Bank, 2009)
- During hard economic times it is girls first before boys who are pulled out of education and into domestic and other forms of labour.
- More girls and young women are forced into the sex industry and have to use their bodies to earn money.
- More young girls become involved in child labour.
- Young women and girls are the first to lose their jobs.

*Globalisation:

The spread of business, communication and technology across the world, which connects people across countries.

Sivamaggiamma, a 14 year old construction site worker from India, describes the work she does: **“I hate it here. Even if I am sick I have to go to work. I can't stay at home for a day even. The work here is very hard. I carry heavy loads - sand, cement, debris...we go on and on all day. From about 9am to about 6 or 6.30.”**

How often do you see girls of Sivamaggiamma's age working on construction sites, lifting heavy loads and working long hours every day of the week? Unfortunately Sivamaggiamma's story is not unusual; she is just one of millions of girls who are forced into a harsh and difficult working life from a young age.



Mercy, from Tanzania, remembers her life as a six year old: **“With my tiny hands I learned to wring water out of the baby’s clothes. My soft back learned to bend and clean the yard...While I learned all this, my brothers left me each day for their play... I was now the sister with home responsibilities...I would never play with my brothers again.”**



Girls’ Work

Most of the work girls and young women carry out is unseen and undervalued.

Girls involved in informal work:

- Receive low wages
- Have fewer employment rights (so they cannot try to get better working conditions or pay)
- Are less able to get access to healthcare and education.

Domestic and Unpaid Care Work:

There are lots of different types of work that girls are involved in on a daily basis, but most of this work is not recognised as being ‘work.’ The most common form of work that girls under 16 carry out is domestic work which includes unpaid care duties, like washing dishes, doing the laundry, babysitting and fetching water or firewood. Many families believe that girls should work in the home whilst boys usually work outside the home.

The Importance of Economic Rights

Girls who have economic rights are able to lead a life which is socially and economically secure. Economic rights cannot be given to someone, but they can be strengthened through empowerment. Girls who have economic rights do not only have the right to work, but they enjoy other rights which enable them to overcome obstacles. These rights include:

- The right to own property
- The right to an adequate standard of living
- The right to social security
- The right to health
- The right to education
- The right to work.

Without economic rights girls will remain hidden, unheard and undervalued. Economic rights should not only be held by only SOME girls in the world. They should be enjoyed by all girls as a basic human right so they are able to live happy, safe and fulfilling lives.

EmPOWERment

What does it mean to be empowered?

Do you think the girls in your country are empowered young women? Empowerment involves giving girls the power to make decisions and choices about their lives, or:

“Developing a sense of self worth, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one’s own life” UNIFEM

An Empowered Girl’s Voice: The 3 As, Assets*, Agency*, Achievements

“I HAVE ASSETS”*

SOCIAL ASSETS: I have a strong social support system which enables me to make choices, achieve my goals and accumulate resources. I have a supportive family, a network of friends, role models/mentors and access to online communities and networks. My birth was registered, I have received immunisations and I am well-nourished.

HUMAN ASSETS: I possess the skills and knowledge needed to perform labour that is of economic value: I have literacy and numeracy skills, a secondary education, science, maths and technology capabilities, financial literacy, business skills and vocational training.

MATERIAL ASSETS: I have inherited land and property, have a bank account, access to credit.

“I HAVE AGENCY”*

I am able to set goals and take steps to achieve these goals. I can go to school, aim to pass my exams, enter further education and secure the job of my choice.

- I have power WITHIN different aspects of my life (family, education, career etc).
- I have power OVER my future and the path my life takes.
- I have the power TO make choices and achieve my goals.

“I HAVE ACHIEVEMENTS”

I have been able to attend school in order to gain academic qualifications and I have received training to equip me with job skills for the future.

Also, I have the opportunity to pursue further education and to attend university to gain more achievements.



GIRLS ASK YOURSELF, **“Do I have the 3 As?”**



BOYS ASK YOURSELF, **“Does my sister/mother/auntie/female friend have the 3 As?”**

If so, you or your female relatives and friends are empowered girls whose assets, agency and achievements lead to **CAPABILITIES**.

A girl with capabilities is an empowered girl who can go far in life. She can gain an education and skills, build a strong support network of friends and make choices about her future. Her future is like a blank canvas and she can decide the route she takes. She can draw out the map of her life in bright colours.

***Assets:** Anything of material value or usefulness that is owned by a person.

***Agency:** The ability to set goals to act on and achieve.

A Disempowered* Girl's Voice:

The report shows that millions of girls all over the world are not empowered: they do not have assets, do not have a sense of agency and cannot achieve their dreams. It is important to hear their voices, to understand why they are disempowered and to think about how changes can be made to make sure girls' economic rights are upheld.

"I don't want to get married and have children, at least not anytime soon...I want to work and study. I don't want to be like another girl I know who is 13 years old and already pregnant."

"I have learned one thing: if you are educated, there are many choices in front of you. You do not have to follow, you can create your own road- then others will follow you."

"The family I work for is generally kind to me. Nonetheless, I miss home and I am lonely. I feel I have no

one to turn to, no one to share my feelings with. I have no idea how long I will be able to contain myself in this mechanical environment. I realise that my family's survival depends on my ability to continue with my job."

"I really want to study. I studied up to class five but because of circumstances, my family now keeps me at home. I do household chores and farm work... if others also did housework then I would have time to study."

The Value of Education:

"Education helps you see what is wrong with the world and gives you the confidence to question it."

Bhanwari, 20 years old, India

The girls voices featured above speak of the value of education and how they long to study instead of work. But why is education such a valuable thing to have?



Girls' education leads to a higher income.

Each extra year of education boosts a girl's wages by 10-20%. Also, educating more girls means that nations and countries will also benefit and see a greater level of income.



Educating girls leads to smaller, healthier families.

The longer a girl stays in education the more likely she is to delay having children and to realise the value of educating her children. This helps her to break the cycle of poverty.



Educated girls are less likely to contract HIV/AIDS.

A study from Zambia showed that HIV/AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls.



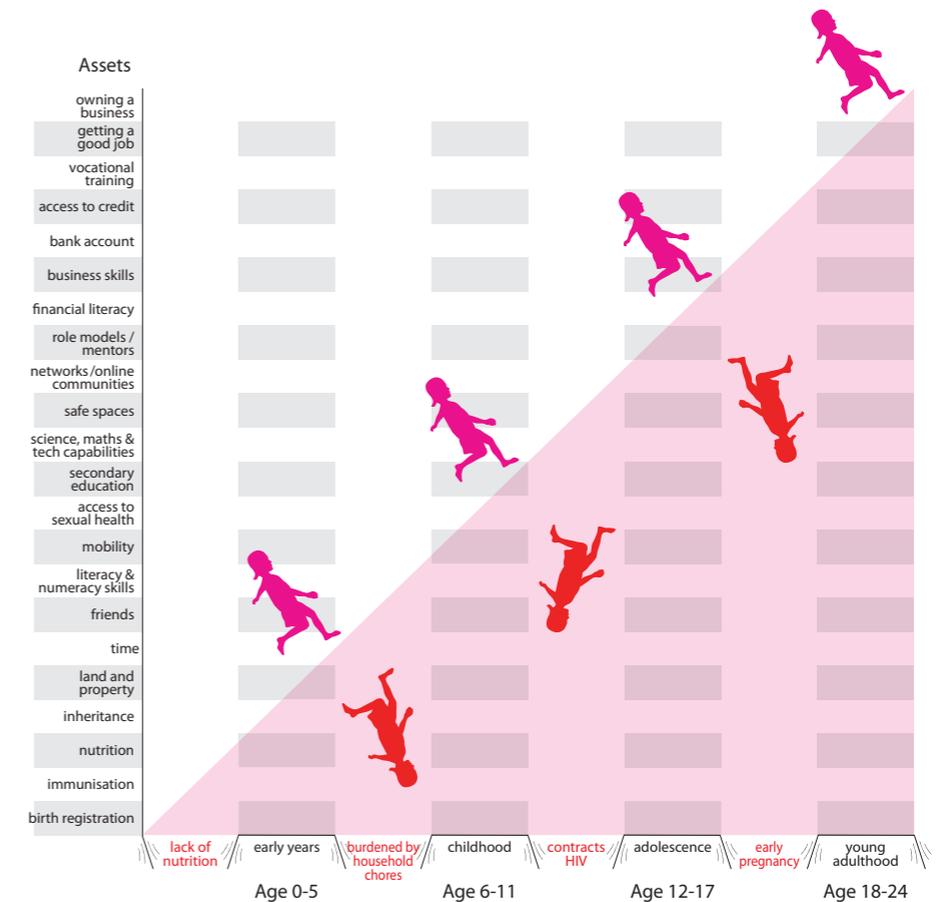
Education can encourage young women to get involved with politics.

This will help to promote gender equality on a local and national level.

Girls' life cycle: Negotiating the Pitfalls

Many girls across the world are disempowered, as they do not have the ability to change their life or influence their situation. They face several potential pitfalls in early life which could change their future for the worse.

This diagram shows how girls with assets can live a healthy and successful life. The assets on this diagram are things that many children take for granted in some countries, such as having enough good food to eat, having free time to spend with friends and going to school to get an education.



EARLY YEARS (0-5 years):

Female babies may be unhealthy from a young age as they have not been fed or cared for properly. In Bangladesh, girls have a 12% higher chance of dying before they are 5 years old than boys.

CHILDHOOD (6-11 years):

Girls are pulled into domestic labour and household jobs while their brothers enjoy more freedom.

ADOLESCENCE (12-17 years):

Girls become vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS and are likely to experience early pregnancy and other health problems. They are often pulled out of school and denied an education due to pressures from their family to take on a care role in the home.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD (18-24 years):

Having experienced the earlier pitfalls, young women are left with very few opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. They are likely to be raising children whilst working in the informal sector in a poorly paid, unsafe job in order to feed their family.

Each of these pitfalls which girls face at various stages of their early lives result in **MISSED OPPORTUNITIES**. By neglecting the needs and rights of girls, countries are missing out on opportunities for economic growth.

*Disempowered: When an individual is denied choice.

Changing the Future: What Needs to be Done

We believe that girls deserve the same opportunities as their brothers. We believe girls have a right to be invested in, a right to be acknowledged as an economic force to be reckoned with. It is time for us to really listen to the voices of girls - they are the key to change.



“In the past there was a belief that men should lead and women should only follow behind. But that is changing. I believe that anything a boy can do a girl can do too, sometimes even better.” **Awa**, 20 years old, Senegal

A Global Plan for Investment in Girls



Make sure **gender equality goals** are a priority and that international bodies such as the United Nations stay committed to girls' and young women's rights.



Make sure **girls' education** from an early age is a priority, and ensure it continues to adolescence and beyond.



Increase investment in young women's **work opportunities**.



Make sure girls and young women have **free access to social services** and **social protection programmes**.



Invest in **young women's leadership**.



Focus on equality for girls and young women in **land and property ownership**.



Make sure girls' and young women's work is properly counted and included in **national and international data** and statistics.



Make sure gender equality goals are put into national and regional **economic policies**.