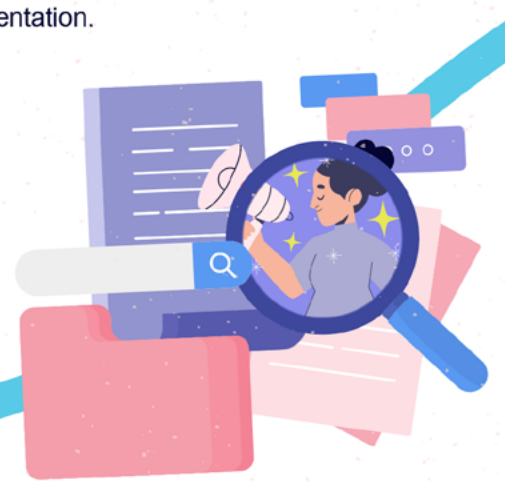


2023 STATE OF THE WORLD'S GIRLS REPORT: FACTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

The **State of the World's Girls Report (SOTWG)** is published every year for International Day of the Girl on 11 October. The report contains the annual, flagship research for **Girls Get Equal (GGE)**, a youth-led social change campaign championing gender equality on three fronts: equal power, freedom, and representation.

This year's report contributes to the current evidence base on girls' and young women's campaigning. Existing studies showed that girls and young women's campaigning is an under-researched area, especially in low and lower middle-income countries. Moreover, while there are many studies on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is little on how SDGs can work more effectively for girls and women, and virtually nothing on how female and girl activism can drive forward the SDGs.



BACKGROUND

The world is off-track for achieving the SDGs. In some cases, progress has reverted. There has also been little progress on gender equality at the global level between 2015 and 2020.

Around the world, girls and women from marginalized communities continue to face multiple forms of discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity and disability. **But through campaigning, they are given a platform to share their stories and experiences, learn from and support each other and raise awareness on intersectional issues.**



More and more young people around the world are engaging in advocacy and campaigning, individually and collectively by joining and organizing movements for gender justice. In the Philippines, there is a wide pool of active youth and youth-focused organizations, and many more individual advocates across different regions exercising their right to political participation.

While there are government-mandated provisions recognizing the role of youth in shaping development outcomes and institutionalizing their participation, open pathways to decision-making spaces are not always a guarantee. Violence, discrimination, and intimidation continue to hold youth advocates back from voicing out their concerns.



In light of these realities, the SOTWG not only explores the experiences of girls and young women in campaigning (marking one of the most extensive global research surveys of girl leaders conducted to date). It also recognizes the power of their leadership and the crucial role they play in promoting gender equality and driving forward inclusive development goals.

1100

GIRLS AND YOUNG CAMPAIGNERS

across a wide range of political, civic and income contexts and intersectional identities participated in the global study conducted between March and May 2023 by Plan International. To gather data on participants experiences of campaigning, the following methods were used:



TOP 5 ISSUES THAT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN CAMPAIGN ON

*Based on 25 respondents from the Philippines



All of the girls and young women in the interviews and focus groups discussed focusing either on, or a combination of, climate change, gender equality, and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including teenage pregnancy. They share almost the same areas of focus as girl advocates globally, whose top issue of concern is gender equality. **For one girl, the issues she campaigns on were drawn from firsthand observations in her own community:**

EMPOWERED*, 18

“ My campaigning on **climate change** is very important to me because the problem is big; Our community is not that resilient when it comes to calamities. **The impact was severe not just for the people themselves but also for their source of income and properties, and the entire community was affected as well.** Our community is also experiencing high rates of **teenage pregnancy**. Almost all of the children and youth were getting involved or engaged in early pregnancy, which affected not only their education but also their health, causing them to stop studying. ”

*Names of girl advocates quoted were changed for safeguarding purposes

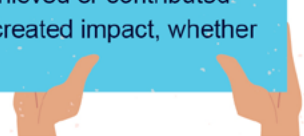
In the global findings, some girl advocates identified personal experiences of adversity as their main motivating factor behind their campaigning. These experiences were often related to their family or broader circumstances they encountered in childhood and made them understand that they had to stand up and address challenges of inequality and harmful norms themselves.

CAMPAIGNING ACTIVITIES THAT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN PERCEIVED AS MOST IMPACTFUL

*Based on 25 respondents from the Philippines



The girls and young women who discussed impact were positive that their work achieved or contributed towards a positive outcome. Some of the girls shared examples of how they have created impact, whether through sharing knowledge, raising awareness, or seeing behavior change.





For girls and young women, **collective campaigning or advocacy** tended to be easier, more efficient, or more enjoyable compared to individual campaigning as it involved working with and learning from other people.



KRISTINE, 20

“With other people, the task is much easier. The more our campaign is known, and our advocacy is introduced to the community and policymakers, especially stakeholders, the easier it is to implement our campaigns and advocacy. The support [forms] a foundation.”

KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF SDGS

Most of the girls and young women were aware of the SDGs and were able to provide definitions and examples. Young advocates already use the SDGs in their campaign and influencing work, and this was consistent with advocates across different regions and countries. For some, the SDGs provide guidance on campaign actions.



EANE, 17

“They are such a big help when it comes to spreading information about certain social issues, and they are taking action and attaching importance to them.”

WHILE MAJORITY OF YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRL ACTIVISTS SAID THEY

developed or learned new skills
(80%)

developed their confidence
(68%)

felt pride and satisfaction for contributing to change
(40%)

less than half (48%) of those surveyed said that the impact achieved by their campaign, advocacy or influencing met or exceeded their expectations.

TOP BARRIERS TO CAMPAIGNING



52%
Lack of finances or resources



40%
Lack of confidence in myself and skills



36%
Fearing for my safety if I were to take part



36%
Fearing the views of others in my family or community



20%
Feeling excluded or intimidated due to my age

*Based on 25 respondents from the Philippines.

TOP NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES AS A RESULT OF CAMPAIGNING

48% Feeling not listened to by adults

28% Fearing own safety

Girls and young women interviewed were asked directly if the barriers mentioned were more or less difficult because of their gender. **They responded that gender and age were an issue, as they are underestimated, or receive backlash or a lack of support because of gendered social norms within their community.**



EANE, 17

“I think there’s still a stereotypical and misogynistic approach to us female advocates and campaigners, especially in our community.”

EXPERIENCES IN ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

The majority of girls and young women were also unclear on how the government acts on the issues they focus on. There is a lack of clarity on specific actions and details, as well as their implementation and efficiency. Some also mentioned a difficulty in engaging government actors due to certain laws restricting social movements and due to young people not being part of decision-making spaces. These echo the experiences of girl advocates in other countries globally.



Majority of the girls and young women discussed continuing with their campaign work in the future

through sharing aspirations of inspiring or supporting other advocates, fulfilling their dream of being a campaigner, or progressing with the organization they work with. When asked what Plan International or similar NGOs could do to support the girls and women in their advocacy, the answers of those who responded all included a focus on funding or resources. They also cited the involvement and support from decision makers as helpful, as well as tools and capacity building activities for youth.

SUPPORT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE ACTION!



The basic right of girls and all young people to live, lead, and participate without fear of violence and intimidation, should be respected. **Empowering children, adolescents, and young people, in all their diversity, to make informed decisions and have control over their lives and bodies, free from discrimination, coercion, or violence, is essential. When they are supported in exercising their agency, they become formidable advocates for change, driving progress, and shaping a better future for all.** It is critical that power holders in all decision-making spaces support girls' and young women's collective action and recognize their value and role as civil society actors.

THERE ARE FIVE KEYWAYS TO ACHIEVE THIS.



Increase the amount of **flexible and diverse funding to grassroots girl and youth-led groups and networks**. Provide financial resources through more inclusive and participatory grant-making processes co-designed with girls.



Strengthen adolescent girls and young women's participation in civic and political life: empowering grassroots girl and youth-led groups, and opening safe, inclusive, sustainable pathways to decision-making spaces.



Support girls' and young women's education at all levels, including the necessary soft skills development to build self-confidence, improve communication competences and bolster leadership potential.



Governments must increase their political will, investments in and commitment to gender equality as a cross-cutting priority for the 2030 Agenda at the SDG summit and for the reminder of the SDGs.



Address barriers to girls' and young women's campaigning and the mounting backlash against those who are politically active - at family, community, national and international levels: particularly against the backdrop of strong anti-rights movements and increased gender discrimination.

Full report available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/turning-world-around/>

Disclaimer: Responses from the survey, interviews, and FGDs cannot be said to represent the views of campaigners per country or even globally. The insights outlined above should be understood as part of the wider study on girls' campaigning and advocacy work across different regions in the world. We recommend checking out the previous SOTWG Reports for more detailed studies on girls and young women's experiences of specific issues, particularly Representation (2019), Safety Online/Offline (2020, 2021), and Political Participation (2022).