

Key Messages: Girls' Progress = Goals Progress

More than 1.1 billion girls younger than 18 are poised to take on the future. Investing in them – including in their health, education and safety – allows them to build better lives and to create a more peaceful and prosperous world for us all.

Investing in girls' health, safety and education – in times of peace and crisis – helps them reach for their dreams and shape their own lives.

Progress for girls is not just good for girls; it is also good for families, communities, nations and the world.

Girls have always changed the world; this generation can make it even better.

Many of girls' most persistent struggles and needs are addressed in the SDGs. For example:

Empowerment: Goal 5 addresses gender equality and issues including child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting and the gender-specific risks of sexual and intimate partner violence.

Health: Goal 3 addresses health including maternal and neonatal mortality, access to reproductive and sexual health care, and epidemics including AIDS.

Education: Goal 4 calls for efforts to provide inclusive, equal and free access to education from pre-primary to secondary school and to work towards gender parity in school and vocational training.

Water, sanitation and hygiene: Goal 6 calls for universal access to safe, clean water; it directly addresses vulnerability concerns for women and girls without safe water and sanitation facilities; important for girls is also menstrual hygiene management and the time dedicated to fetching water.

Work: Goal 8 addresses the challenges of creating decent work and inclusive economic growth. But if girls do not attend school because of unpaid household work at home or other labour, their chances of attaining productive employment and contributing to inclusive economic growth will be stifled.

Protection: Goal 16 addresses critical justice and safety issues that threaten girls' lives and futures including abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children.

Tackling the challenges girls face in their daily lives can serve as a starting point for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for every child.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that girls struggle daily with disadvantages, especially girls who face discrimination based on disability, location or migration status.

The SDGs establish an ambitious plan for tackling the obstacles girls face in their lives, especially the most disadvantaged girls.

To reach the SDGs is to reach girls with the health care, protection and education they need to be empowered and equal members of their families, communities and the world.

[As world leaders develop plans and budgets aimed at creating a better world and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, investing in girls is a strategy for success.](#)

There is a direct link between progress for girls and progress for us all – a link backed by research. For example:

- An extra year of primary school for girls can increase their eventual adult wages by 10 to 20 per cent, and an extra year of secondary school increases them by 15 to 25 per cent.ⁱ
- Studies from Kenya, Brazil, and India show that delaying adolescent childbearing could have increased national economic productivity by US\$3.4 billion, US\$3.5 billion, and US\$7.7 billion dollars, respectively.ⁱⁱ
- If all girls completed secondary education in low- and lower-middle income countries, under-five child mortality could be cut in half.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key Messages: What Counts for Girls

[Investing in girls is not just a matter of more money; it requires detailed knowledge and targeted action.](#)^{iv}

To achieve the future envisioned by the 2030 agenda, investment in girls critical – in times of peace and during emergency situations.

Data by ethnicity, age, income, disability, location and migration status should also be disaggregated by sex to help identify and support the most disadvantaged girls in every corner of the world.

With detailed and reliable data, governments can target investment and efforts into empowering girls so they grow, learn and thrive.

Investment in data is necessary in order to effectively hold officials accountable for creating the kind of change that truly improves girls' lives.

Information is limited for many of the challenges, opportunities and successes girls encounter in daily life. ^v

Fewer than 50 countries can provide data disaggregated by sex from vital statistics and civil registration systems. Less than 33 per cent of countries regularly produce gender statistics on informal employment, entrepreneurship and time use. ^{vi vii}

Vast gaps in data exist on topics including intimate partner violence, poverty, entrepreneurship and adolescent deaths from pregnancy and childbirth complications. ^{viii}

More consistently collected data on the struggles in girls' lives – including poverty, sexual violence, and unpaid labour – can help uncover new and persistent gender-based challenges. ^{ix}

Consistently collected data on girls' successes can highlight new possibilities and lead to new opportunities.

With data, there can be data-based solutions. ^x

The more we know about the struggles and victories in a girl's life, the more that can be done to remove obstacles and support successes.

New approaches to collecting data can provide the information necessary to improve girls' lives – approaches such as analysis of big data and new methods to enhance vital statistics and civil registry systems.

Real-time data can be collected and used to protect girls against dangers including gender-based violence; it can also be used to improve services for girls in emergencies such as conflict and natural disasters.

The emergence of data about girls' lives has uncovered new information and led to results for girls. For example:

- Data disaggregated by sex on HIV and AIDS highlighted the disproportionate risk for adolescent girls, leading some governments to target services and programmes to their needs.
- In at least four countries, data showing high rates of gender-based violence led to new domestic violence legislation.
- Data on gender parity in schools helped drive investment in girls' education. ^{xi}

Girls are one of the best sources of data; we need to listen when they tell us what *they* want.

Innovative real-time messaging platforms can provide an outlet for girls to tell the world what they want and allows them to hold governments accountable.

By listening to girls describe their experiences, decision makers gain critical insight into girls' lives and can discover ways to work with girls to help them reach their goals.

Investing in data on girls will help governments and partners:

Enhance national capacity and systems, allowing them to collect, analyse and disseminate data on girls of all ages.

Improve statistics on gender-based violence, adolescent pregnancy and reproductive health, informal employment, entrepreneurship, unpaid work, and other priorities for girls and young women.

Improve data collection efforts for undercounted groups including data on sexual violence against adolescent girls aged 10 to 14.

Harness big data and other technology in order to gather data on sensitive issues and girls' opinions on development issues as expressed on social media.

Remedy the gender bias in existing measurement tools, particularly biases that exclude the most vulnerable.

Improved data collection tools that can prevent underreporting of violence against girls and undercounting of their births and deaths.

Pilot and scale-up innovative real-time data platforms so girls can be active participants in programme design and so that programmes achieve the most impactful results.

ⁱ United Nations, Inter-agency Task Force on Rural Women, *Fact Sheet: Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals* and UNICEF (2011) http://www.unicef.org/media/media_58417.html

ⁱⁱ UNFPA (2013) State of World Population: Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14: Teaching and Learning: Achieving quality for all – Gender Summary*, UNESCO, Paris, 2014, p. 20.

^{iv} Vaitla, Bapu and Cheney Wells and Carolina Van Horn, *Disaggregated Data: The impact of demographic and health surveys*, Data Impact Case Studies, <http://dataimpacts.org/project/health-surveys/>, accessed 22 August 2016.

^v Buvinic, Mayra and Ruth Levine, *What is Wrong with Data on Women and Girls*, Data2X, p. 3; accessed 22 August 2016; http://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/What-Is-Wrong-with-Data-on-Women-and-Girls_November-2015_WEB_1.pdf and United Nations Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and statistics*, Chapter: Moving forward on Gender Statistics, UNSD, New York, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/dataWW2015.html>, assessed 23 August and Buvinic, Mayra, Rebecca Furst-Nichols and Gayatri Koolwal, *Mapping Gender Data Gaps*, Data2X/UN Foundation,

Washington, D.C., pp. 2-3. [http://data2x.org/wp-](http://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Data2X_MappingGenderDataGaps_FullReport.pdf)

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^{vi} Buvinic, Mayra, Rebecca Furst-Nichols and Gayatri Koolwal, *Mapping Gender Data Gaps*, Data2X/UN Foundation, Washington, D.C., p. 13. [http://data2x.org/wp-](http://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Data2X_MappingGenderDataGaps_FullReport.pdf)

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^{vii} United Nations Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and statistics*, Chapter: Moving forward on Gender Statistics, UNSD, New York, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/dataWW2015.html>, assessed 23 August.

^{viii} Buvinic, Mayra, Rebecca Furst-Nichols and Gayatri Koolwal, *Mapping Gender Data Gaps*, Data2X/UN Foundation, Washington, D.C., p. 13. [http://data2x.org/wp-](http://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Data2X_MappingGenderDataGaps_FullReport.pdf)

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^{ix} United Nations Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and statistics*, Chapter: Moving forward on Gender Statistics, UNSD, New York, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/dataWW2015.html>, assessed 23 August.

^x Vaitla, Bapu and Cheney Wells and Carolina Van Horn, *Disaggregated Data: The impact of demographic and health surveys*, Data Impact Case Studies, <http://dataimpacts.org/project/health-surveys/>, accessed 22 August 2016.

^{xi} Buvinic, Mayra and Ruth Levine, *What is Wrong with Data on Women and Girls*, Data2X, p. 3; accessed 16 September 2016; http://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/What-Is-Wrong-with-Data-on-Women-and-Girls_November-2015_WEB_1.pdf