

## INVESTING IN AND SUPPORTING 10-YEAR-OLD GIRLS WHAT'S AT STAKE

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying 17 Sustainable Development Goals are the world's blueprint for equitable, inclusive development that leaves no one behind. This 15-year plan promises to help transform the futures of millions of 10-year-old girls who have traditionally been left behind.

Many of the Sustainable Development Goals may only be achieved if everyone's potential—including that of all 10-year-old girls—is realized. Chief among the Goals is a vision for a world without poverty. But countries cannot end poverty if girls are unable to make a safe and healthy transition from adolescence to adulthood and become productive members of their communities and nations.

A 10-year-old girl who is blocked from completing her education means that Sustainable Development Goal 4, quality education for all, will also be unattainable. And without quality education, that 10-year-old girl will not acquire skills to earn a better income and find decent work, as sought in Goal 8. Goal 3 on health and well-being at all ages is not feasible for a girl at risk of HIV or early pregnancy.

**What the world will look like in 15 years will depend on whether we do everything in our power to ignite the potential of a 10-year-old girl today.**

# 10 ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR THE 10-YEAR-OLD GIRL

## LAWS

- 1 Stipulate legal equality for girls, backed by consistent legal practice.
- 2 Ban all harmful practices against girls, and make 18 the minimum marriage age.

## SERVICE

- 3 Provide safe, high-quality education that fully upholds gender equality in curricula, teaching standards and extracurricular activities.
- 4 In working towards universal health care, institute a 10-year-old mental and physical health check-up for all girls.
- 5 Provide age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education when puberty begins.

## POLICY

- 6 Institute a rigorous and systematic focus on inclusion, acting on all factors rendering girls vulnerable to being left behind.

## INVESTMENTS

- 7 Track and close investment gaps in young adolescent girls.
- 8 Mobilize new funds for mental health, protection and reducing unpaid work that constrains options for girls.

## DATA

- 9 Use the 2030 Agenda data revolution to better track progress for girls, including on sexual and reproductive health.

## NORMS

- 10 Engage girls, boys and all the people around them in challenging and changing gender discriminatory norms.



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# 1

How our future depends on a girl at this decisive age



UNFPA state of world population 2016

HIGHLIGHTS



## I'M 10

Today's 60 million 10-year-old girls represent a challenge and an opportunity for the global community.

Photo: © UNFPA/Live Images



## MY CHALLENGES

Girls in many parts of the world face a wall of obstacles to their health and rights when they reach age 10, the start of adolescence.

Photo: © UNFPA/Vu Ngoc Dung



## MY POTENTIAL

Investments in the health and capabilities of girls also protect their human rights and enable them to realize their full potential. Such investments can also yield returns through demographic dividends.

Photo: © UNFPA/Matthias Mugisha



## MY FUTURE

With support from family, community and nation, and the full realization of her rights, a 10-year-old girl can thrive and help bring about the future we all want.

Photo: © Panos Pictures/Tommy Trenchard

She is 10 years old. Capable of rapidly absorbing wisdom and knowledge from those around her, she is poised to one day become an inspiring leader, a productive worker, an innovator, a caring parent or any of the other roles that power a thriving, dynamic society. She will shape the future of her community and our shared world.

A flurry of life-changing events pulls her in many directions. Where she ends up depends on the support she receives and the power she has to shape her own future.

The global cohort of 10-year-olds lives in a world that is very different from the one their parents grew up in, with unique challenges and opportunities.

In some parts of the world, a 10-year-old girl, at the start of adolescence, sees limitless possibilities ahead and begins making choices that will influence her education and, later, her work and her life.

But in other parts of the world, a 10-year-old girl's horizons are limited. As she reaches puberty, family, community and institutions may block her safe and healthy transition through adolescence into adulthood. By age 10, she may be forced to marry. She may be pulled out of school to begin a lifetime of childbearing and servitude to her husband. At 10, she may be denied any say in decisions about her life.

If her rights are not well protected, through laws, services and investments, the chance to bloom in adolescence and become an empowered adult forever slips away.

Impeding a girl's safe, healthy path through adolescence to a productive and autonomous adulthood is a violation of her rights. But it also takes a toll on her community and nation. Whenever a girl's potential goes unrealized, we all lose.

Conversely, when a girl is able to exercise her rights, stay healthy, complete her education and make decisions about her own life, she—and everyone around her—wins. She will be more productive and make a better living and in turn make the world a better place.

All evidence suggests that healthy, educated girls will in the course of their lives contribute to greater economic growth, lower rates of infant and maternal death, smaller and better educated families and lower prevalence of HIV.

A girl who was 10 in 2015, when the Sustainable Development Goals were endorsed by the global community, will be 25 when the Goals are to have been achieved. Will she be left behind? Or will she be enjoying her human rights and well-being and exploring the many avenues open to her?

Much depends on the choices many different people make, from parents to policymakers, educators to health-care professionals, economists to entrepreneurs, journalists to community leaders. We must all be involved. In many ways, a 10-year-old girl's life trajectory will be the true test of whether the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a success—or failure. What the world will look like in 15 years will depend on our doing everything in our power to ignite the potential of a 10-year-old girl today.



About half of the world's 10-year-old girls today are in Asia and the Pacific.



32 million girls of primary-school age are not in school.



Countries with policies and institutions to build a 10-year-old's human capital stand to realize major economic gains.



If equity for all 10-year-old girls is the objective, special measures may be required for those left furthest behind.