

THE GIRL EFFECT MOVEMENT: IMPACT OF SOCIAL  
COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS IN THE  
EMPOWERMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

by

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The ‘Girl Effect’ is a movement and theory of change launched by the Nike Foundation based on the idea that investing in the empowerment of adolescent girls is the key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. This thesis explores the logic of this discourse and investigates notions of agency, empowerment, and development through girl-centered social communications platforms in the Girl Effect movement. I seek to answer the following research question: How does the Girl Effect movement position adolescent girls to increase their own agency through the use of social communication platforms, and does this strategy have the potential to empower girls and, through this effect, transform society? This line of research is situated within a larger debate that questions the motives of corporations to promote the social good based on principles of smart economics.

Within this debate I focus on the impact of three social communications platforms in the Girl Effect movement, *Ni Nyampinga* magazine in Rwanda, *Yegna* radio drama show in Ethiopia, and a participatory video program called Video Girls for Change in Guatemala. I argue that while the Girl Effect acknowledges the intrinsic

value of increasing girls' voice and agency, their discourse overwhelmingly revolves around girls' instrumental value in achieving socioeconomic change. Furthermore, I postulate that transformative development, in the sense that positive change occurs for society at large, cannot be achieved by girls alone and must involve a more holistic approach that engages the wider community, including boys and men, and must be accompanied by complementary policies and infrastructure projects that help girls and women to overcome structural constraints that actively disempower them.

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## **Introduction**

This thesis investigates notions of agency, empowerment, and development through girl-centered social communications platforms in the Girl Effect movement. The Girl Effect is a movement launched in 2008 by the Nike Foundation in collaboration with the NoVo Foundation, United Nations Foundation, and Coalition for Adolescent Girls. The movement aims to leverage the empowerment of girls to break intergenerational cycles of poverty. The Girl Effect theory of change is to develop “the unique potential of adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves, their families, their communities, their countries and the world” (girlffect.org). By targeting the 250 million adolescent girls, 10-19 years of age, who live in poverty, the Nike Foundation and its partners aim to positively impact this vulnerable population before they reach adulthood and encounter more complex problems. The logic behind the Girl Effect movement, particularly in relation to funding social communications platforms that amplify girls’ voices, presupposes that by making girls, their voices, and their perspectives more visible within their communities, the girls themselves will gain greater agency and control over their own lives. As a direct consequence, according to this theory, this impact will have a positive intergenerational, multiplier effect on future children, particularly girls.

My research project examines how the Girl Effect movement positions adolescent girls to use social communications platforms in order to increase their own agency. It also investigates the capacity of this strategy to empower girls and, through this effect, to transform society. This line of research seeks to assess the validity of the movement’s assumptions in employing social communications strategies to increase

effective agency in girl's lives multiplied through the lives of other girls over time, and examines the Girl Effect's potential to initiate large scale, transformative development through this multiplier effect. Furthermore, my research explores the critique of this approach as an extension of neoliberal economics and large corporations like Nike to accumulate capital following free market strategies as opposed to transforming girls' lives for development ends that go beyond neoliberal market expansion. This situates the Girl Effect at the heart of a critical debate: Can a corporation do social good without an ulterior motive for profit gain and can transformative social change occur by focusing on the empowerment of impoverished adolescent girls rather than trying to change the larger system itself? Critics point to more "substantive" drivers of poverty, such as structural adjustment, global debt, tax evasion, and labor exploitation, and argue that modern development discourse that focuses on girls and poverty is a corporate fable designed to keep the system intact, turning girls into consumers, expanding market power, and diffusing blame. They argue that the conversation on social change needs to talk less about investments pay off and more about who needs to pay up.

Within this debate I focus on the impact of initiatives in the Girl Effect movement, evaluating the potential of three social communications platforms to discover if they are effective instruments in achieving the type of social change proposed by the Girl Effect. This includes an analysis of two joint initiatives between the Nike Foundation and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine in Rwanda and the Yegna radio drama show in Ethiopia. The name Ni Nyampinga means, "the girl who is beautiful inside and out and who makes good decisions." Girls themselves named the magazine,



taking a traditional Kinyarwandan word describing the rite of passage for a girl to become a woman and giving it a new positive meaning. The editorial content challenges set perceptions, showcases female role models and offers new skills and advice on topics of education, sexual health and violence. Yegna means “ours” in Amharic and is meant to symbolize Girl Hub Ethiopia’s approach to ensuring that no girl in Ethiopia is forgotten. Yegna aims to reduce child marriage, give girls control of economic assets, and encourage girls to stay in school by creating role models that embody the behavior intended for the audience to emulate. Whereas the Ni Nyampinga platform is based on real stories, the *Yegna* radio show operates as a drama that follows the story lines of a five-member girl band. For comparative purposes, I investigate the Video Girls for Change communications platform, which used participatory video to monitor and evaluate existing programs under the Girl Effect. I explore this program primarily as a smaller scale model to connect with girls on a more intensive level, including more sustained engagement with a range of stakeholders in their communities.

The Girl Effect movement states that it hopes to use these platforms to change local perceptions of girls so they can grow beyond the dictates of restrictive social norms.<sup>1</sup> It aims to alter gender expectations by making girls more visible in their societies and bringing greater awareness to the challenges that girls face. At the same time, its strategy aims to instill a sense of increased self-confidence and self-worth in girls by providing positive female role models with whom girls can relate as well as greater access to information regarding issues affecting their lives, such as domestic

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<sup>1</sup> A social norm refers to a socially embodied and individually perceived imperative of behavioral standards for members of a society.

violence, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health, and economic literacy. This strategy to amplify the voice and perceived value of girls in their societies, according to the theory of the Girl Effect movement, will translate into increased agency for the girls themselves. In the Girl Effect theory of change, the growth of girls' voices, value, and agency is assumed to manifest as economic and *socially transformative* dividends for the larger community as girls realize greater individual economic success and are more likely than males to reinvest their assets in the wellbeing of their own children.

### **Assumptions of the Girl Effect**

According to the Nike Foundation and language used in the Girl Effect movement,

The 'ideal' adolescent girl is between 10 and 19 years old, is still in education or entering into the job market. She is not married and she has no children. In this ideal world, she has family support and protection, but also the freedom to explore new, adult competencies and develop her independence, to enjoy leisure and to build networks with other people of a similar age (Crawford 21).

The Girl Effect movement is now primarily directed toward developing countries in Africa like Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Nigeria where, particularly in rural areas, the transition to adulthood often occurs during puberty, at which point girls can be expected to be prepared for marriage and soon after, motherhood. The Girl Effect theory of change seeks to address a myriad of cultural and social norms, which hold back women and girls within patriarchal power structures. It is important to analyze these norms in country-specific contexts as they are socially constructed identities that are powerfully reinforced by the social activities that both define and are defined by them. The

difficulty of changing the relative position of men and women in society is culturally contingent, but the patriarchal power relations that characterize societies tend to be deeply embedded in social institutions that discriminate against women.

The purported potential of girls to transform their own lives as well as end the cycle of poverty for their families, communities, and countries assumes girls can be agents of change. The Girl Effect relies on the notion of the multiplier effect, which is the assumption that an educated, healthy woman is more likely to ensure the wellbeing of her children by making sure that they are also educated and healthy. According to this assumption of the Girl Effect theory of change, an investment in an adolescent girl is an investment in her future children's economic and social development. Therefore, the benefits of investing in a girl go beyond the immediate effect on her life as the effect is theoretically multiplied through her children, and her children's children, over time. In order to have this multiplier effect, the Girl Effect movement calls for large-scale investment in girls to help prevent issues like child marriage, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS contraction, and domestic abuse ([girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org)). It promotes investment in girls' health, education, and economic wellbeing as well as leveraging their visibility on the global development stage. For instance, effective prevention efforts focused on behaviors that make girls vulnerable to HIV or those that affect their chances of contracting chronic disease enhance their prospects for better maternal and child health (Temin & Levine 70). In particular, children's health is strongly correlated with their mothers' level of schooling. Bicego and Boerma's (1993) study of seventeen developing countries found a consistent relationship between mothers' greater school attainment and better infant and child health. Likewise, children's school attainment is

closely correlated with their mother's level of education. For example, a study in Latin America found that 15-year-olds whose mothers have some secondary schooling remain in school for two to three years longer than the children of mothers with less than four years of schooling (IADB 1998).

The second notion of the Girl Effect is that people assume girls are being reached by current development initiatives when in reality they are not. In fact, less than two cents of every international development dollar reaches programs specific to adolescent girls, even though multiple studies have shown that women reinvest 90 percent of their income back into the household compared with a 30 to 40 percent reinvestment rate for men (Sharma xiv). This means that women tend to use significantly more of their earnings on their family's basic needs, including nutrition, health, and education that directly contributes to their children's development. Children's programs tend to focus on children under five, youth programs generally target males and older groups, and women's programs do not typically capture adolescent girls. The programs that do reach girls rarely address those who are most at risk (Temin & Levine 10-11). The movement claims that programs must be specifically designed for girls and must measure the impact on girls in order to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The third notion of this theory of change is that the cost of excluding girls is high in terms of their economic potential. The Girl Effect website claims:

In India, adolescent pregnancy results in nearly \$10 billion in lost potential income. In Uganda, 85 percent of girls leave school early, resulting in \$10 billion in lost potential earnings. By delaying child marriage and early birth for one million girls, Bangladesh could

potentially add \$69 billion to the national income over these girls' lifetimes (girleffect.org).

Girls with more schooling participate in greater numbers in the labor force later on and are able to earn more for their families. Just one additional year of school beyond the average increases a girls' eventual wages by ten to twenty percent compared to returns of five to fifteen percent on boys' additional education (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 113). The movement thus promotes girls as agents of change, both on personal and social levels and on economic levels. Appendix A includes the "Girl Effect Factsheet," which demonstrates the movement's focus on five primary areas of adolescent girls lives: marriage, childbirth, economic empowerment, education, and health and safety.

### **What is the Girl Hub?**

The Girl Hub currently acts as the primary catalyst of the Girl Effect movement, with the mission of empowering adolescent girls living in poverty in Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. This strategic collaboration between the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Nike Foundation brings together the expertise of both organizations to create programs for girls, with girls. The Nike Foundation contributes its capabilities in creative development, including brand marketing, social communications, design innovation and consumer insights. DFID has extensive experience in designing and delivering development programs at scale, in research and measurement expertise, and plays an important role as a significant bilateral donor that has strong relationships with the Rwandan and Ethiopian governments as well as other development partners.

Girl Hub's work is concentrated on four areas, including advocacy, brand and communication, partnerships and policy, and insight and knowledge. They aim to develop social communications with the purpose of inspiring and engaging girls as active participants in identifying and creating solutions to challenges they face as well as leveraging these communications platforms to educate the girls and their communities (girleffect.org). Girl Hub strategically positions girls to use social communications platforms with the objective of driving the Girl Effect movement with girls' own voices and actions while creating networks and shaping how communities view and value girls. At the same time, Girl Hub works to inform and influence decision makers to invest in programs that benefit girls while tracking the impact of their work for girls. The Girl Hub's super goal is to enable five million adolescent girls to live in safety and make their own choices over their lives, which they aim to do by leveraging girls' voices, value and agency in their communities through efforts to improve societal attitudes and behaviors toward girls.

The concentration of Girl Hub's efforts on adolescent girls aligns with their strategy to create grounded, focused, and socially relevant communications platforms in order to inspire brand affinity. While the platforms rely primarily on word of mouth to promote their multimedia products, the Hub has invested a significant amount of money in the design process of these communications platforms to create social brands that will connect and resonate with girls. The purpose of fostering connections with adolescent girls in order to strengthen brand affinity<sup>2</sup> among this target population

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<sup>2</sup> The active participation of brand audience in the development, articulation, and use of the brand that helps them form a personal connection to the brand, in this case the Girl Effect.

raises controversy around the intent to use social marketing as a tool for neoliberal expansion. I will address the complications of this strategy and its controversial implications in a later subsection but will first discuss the Girl Effect movement within a development context.

## **Development Context**

### **Economic and Human Development**

At its very essence, development is about change that can be marked as definite positive improvement for people. According to Hugo Slim, development also requires socially and culturally organic continuity, as change must make sense to the people inhabiting the community or society in question (143). Effective development must be culturally, socially, economically, technologically, and environmentally appropriate in a way that supports people's values and capacity to achieve change for the better for future generations. While there have been several different phases of development theory in the past few decades, I will briefly address two of the more prominent theories of development: economic development and human development.

The discourse of economic development on a world scale originated during the postwar reconstruction efforts initiated by the U.S. In 1949. During his inaugural speech, President Harry Truman identified as a priority the development of areas in the West, announcing:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (trumanlibrary.org).



The explicit motives for development are stated as a means to eliminate human suffering, but Truman's rhetoric also draws from an underlying theory of technological development connected to increased production. This theory focuses on growth in terms of annual increase in Gross National Product (GNP) and GNP per capita through measuring the expansion of labor and capital inputs in relation to the efficiency and intensity with which these inputs are utilized in production (D. Clark 10). While economic development typically refers to quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy that promote the standard of living and economic health of a particular region, this type of development also contains a political agenda. As industrial economic development largely depends on capital accumulation, technological advancement has corresponded with the decline of agriculture in the wake of rising industry and commercial objectives. This process of modern industrialization aims for greater production and employment within the manufacturing sector, leading to higher levels of productivity and accelerating economic development (D. Clark 12). However, this approach to development becomes complicated by commercial objectives of profit maximization. Questions arise between the imperative to accumulate capital and the presumed long-term effect of eliminating human misery. The Girl Effect movement claims that adolescent girls have largely been ignored within the development community, yet hold the greatest potential to end poverty in their own countries. Nike Foundation Founding President and CEO Maria Eitel explains, "Adolescent girls are the highest point of leverage. By investing in girls, you can stop poverty before it starts" (qtd. in Kanani). Critics of the movement argue that its rhetoric is overly concerned with economic growth rather than human development and that the Nike Foundation's

hidden motives are in fact self-serving and designed to benefit companies and their shareholders over people, over the well-being of people.

It also important to explore policy frameworks that go beyond prioritizing economic development to focus on broader human and environmental components, including the elimination of poverty, insecurity, and barriers to basic freedoms. Following this focus Amartya Sen postulates a more human-oriented process of expanding people's freedom to develop and act on their capacities (3). This focus on expanding human capacities and freedom, however, contrasts with more narrow views of development that are identified with the growth of GNP, rise in personal incomes, process of industrialization, or technological advance. While these outcomes can be important as a means to expand individual freedoms, development must be viewed in terms of changing the structures which prevent people from developing their capacities more freely. As Sen asserts,

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states (3).

This process of realizing one's own talents and path through the accession of greater freedom not only enhances people's ability to help themselves, but also to influence the world. These principles are central to the course of human development, of which agency is a primary concern. Development, then, is not only about *having* more, but also about *being* more, not only having capacities, but being able to develop them and act on them (Slim 145). In his 1991 book titled, *Democratizing Development*, John Clark states,

Development is not a commodity to be weighed or measured by GNP statistics. It is a process of change that enables people to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential. It requires building up in people the confidence, skills, assets and freedoms necessary to achieve this goal” (36).

The creation of the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) human development index (HDI) in 1990 was a bold step in recognizing human development as more than economic growth. The first Human Development Report acknowledged human development as “a process of enlarging people’s choices,” explaining that “The most crucial ones [choices] are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living” (UNDP 1990, 10). This demonstrates that social indicators beyond economic measures are now influencing what development means at the international level. The Girl Effect movement tries to fit within this framework by aiming to improve girls’ lives and well-being and striving to make development policy more girl-centered. The Girl Effect theory of change strategy is to ‘ignite and inspire’ girls to strengthen their own ‘resilience and agency’ and to become more integrated into society. In doing so, the movement hopes to “open channels through which girls’ voices can be heard, to bring their concerns into development agendas at central level” so that they can become more active within their own development (Crawford IX).

The human development approach also integrates entitlements, or the ability to exercise ownership over and distribution of commodities with the use of human capabilities. In this sense, human capabilities can be understood as improved health and knowledge and their use in terms of work and leisure (D. Clark 18). From this perspective, income serves as a ‘proxy measure’ for the availability of choices that

people have in using their capabilities (D. Clark 18). This point is reiterated in the UNDP's 1993 Human Development Report, which states:

There is no automatic link between income and human development. Several countries have done well in translating their income into the lives of their people: their human development rank is way ahead of their per capita income rank. Other societies have income ranks far above their human development rank, showing their enormous potential for improving the lives of their people (11).

This implies that wealthy countries are not always the most developed in terms of human development measures just as poor countries are not always the least developed. Furthermore, it is important to recognize human development as a universal issue that does not pertain only to rich or poor societies. In considering the portrayal of development as a 'Third World issue,' the Girl Effect movement currently directs the majority of its financial resources toward the developing world, also commonly referred to as the Third World or the Global South. This pattern raises questions around the construction of the 'Girl Effect' as a 'Third World issue' rather than as a universal challenge. Additionally, while many of the project indicators under study reflect rhetoric associated with human development, the ultimate objectives of these initiatives appear to be measured in terms of economic growth. The implications of this discourse surrounding concepts of human and economic development within the Girl Effect movement will be discussed later.

### **The Role of Gender in Development**

Western frameworks for conceptualizing women's issues in the context of development over the past few decades consist of three different approaches: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development

(GAD). The WID approach was the first contemporary movement, which specifically integrated women into the broader development agenda, gaining momentum in the early 1970s when liberal feminists were striving for equal rights and labor opportunities in the U.S. (Miller 3). Esther Boserup's book, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, pioneered the WID model through a compilation of empirical studies showing women as the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and deprived members of society. WID placed emphasized improving women's productive contributions to increase economic efficiency yet linked these concerns to demands for equity and social justice as well (Miller & Razavi 1). By attributing the origin of women's subordination to men in terms of their relative economic contributions and exclusion from the marketplace, this political strategy promoted Western values and targeted individuals as catalysts of both economic and social change (Dogra 340). The arguments behind WID largely aimed at directing development resources to women under the assumption that the costs of investing in women's productivity were justifiable in terms of economic and social returns.

However, one implication of the WID paradigm was that there was little attention paid to men and to power relations between men and women. When portrayed in development discourse, men were implicitly depicted as bad or irresponsible while women were discussed in terms of their productive value where improvement in their status was associated with the value of monetary income in their lives (Dogra 340). Furthermore, the WID strategy largely failed to tackle unequal gender relations on a broader scale despite advocating for greater gender equality implicitly portraying women in the developing world detrimentally as 'traditional' and existing within male-

dominated societies while not challenging the connection between existing economic structures and male dominance. According to many critics, WID wrongly assumed that women must be integrated into their national economic systems, which implied that women were not already participating in development and subsequently downplayed their roles in household production and informal economic and political activities (Dogra 340). Another underlying assumption was that women needed to move from the “traditional” sector to the “modern” sector in order to achieve self-advancement, indicating that “traditional” work roles generally occupied by women in the developing world inhibited their economic potential. Consequently, many critics of WID argue the model prioritizes economic development needs from women over women’s needs for developing their capacities and well-being.

The second approach for addressing women’s issues in development was introduced in the second half of the 1970s when the construction of WAD theory began to highlight the embedding of gender within structural socioeconomic factors. While previous ideas conceptualized development as a vehicle to advance women, the WAD perspective recognized the importance of actively involving women in development projects alongside men in typically patriarchal cultures. By focusing on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, the WAD paradigm stressed the central role of women as economic agents that enables both the production and maintenance of societies (Rathgeber 493). However, this approach also understood that purely economic integration serves to reinforce existing international structures of inequality based on patriarchal interests, and therefore concluded that improving women’s positions required more equitable international structures. For example, the WAD

perspective promoted carefully designed intervention strategies to resolve the underrepresentation of women in economic, political, and social structures rather than fundamental shifts in the social relations of gender. One of the most common critiques of the WAD approach is concerned with its tendency to view women as a single class while largely ignoring differences among women, particularly differences in race, ethnicity, and class as these intersect with gender. Additionally, WAD intervention strategies have been criticized for valuing income-generating activities without taking into account the increased time burdens that they impose on women (Rathgeber 493). In practice, NGOs have tended to apply Western biases and assumptions to development projects in the developing world in which household tasks, including those associated with social reproduction, are assigned no economic value.

As an alternative to the earlier WID focus, the GAD approach emerged in the 1980s to emphasize the need to challenge the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women that have systematically subordinated women. The GAD model linked relations of production and reproduction that departed from the biological focus of gender differences postulated by the WID paradigm (Rathgeber 494). Rather than examining women in isolation, the GAD approach was founded from a holistic perspective that looked at “the totality of social organization, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society” (Malla). It was concerned with the social construction of gender as a relation of power embedded in institutions and the specific gender roles, responsibilities, and expectations associated with men and women. One of the primary criticisms of the GAD model is that it emphasizes social differences between men and women while largely neglecting to

foster bonds between them. It also does not consider the trade-offs that women typically encounter when seeking to achieve cultural ideals of marriage and motherhood (Dogra 341). Some of the sharpest criticism of GAD has come from women in the developing world who argue that development policies based on this model reflect preoccupations of Western feminists. In this sense, 'third world' women are treated as 'victims' of their own cultures, which negates their agency. Many women from countries identified as less developed from an economic standpoint argue that female subordination is not a result of the cultural construction of gender within their own societies but rather a consequence of colonial and post-colonial exploitation (Sen & Grown 30). In other words, to a certain extent, colonial nations exported inequality based on economic models to the countries they colonized.

The Girl Effect movement retains elements of both the WID and GAD models of development. The movement's assumption that the costs of investing in girl's productivity are justifiable in terms of economic and social returns is a throwback to the WID era dominant in the 1970s. This theory of change claims that improving girls' lives through education, health, safety and opportunity can have a ripple effect on economic and social development with the wider community. While including the social, the reasons for investing time, energy, and capital in adolescent girls are primarily determined by economic potential as well as the high cost to national income of excluding girls. Therefore, the empowerment of girls is ultimately viewed in economic terms as, "she is the most influential force in her community to break the cycle of poverty" when she becomes "an educated mother, an active, productive citizen and a prepared employee" (girleffect.org). The Girl Effect also reflects undertones of



the more human centered GAD paradigm by targeting girls as agents of change to help everyone in their community, including boys, change the structures that prevent people from developing their capacities and well-being of themselves and their communities rather than portraying girls as passive recipients of development aid. Its discourse also addresses power relations accorded by cultural norms and gender roles, which considers social structures within their contexts and acknowledges boys and men as potential supporters of girls and women. In this way, the Girl Effect movement seeks to emulate the more holistic approach of the GAD model in terms of focusing on developing girls' abilities to fulfill their potential within the social construction of gendered responsibilities and expectations. However, we will see that the movement seeks to target girls in order to catalyze social change that achieves standards measured by human development indicators with the ultimate goal of realizing national and global economic development. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that economic development and human development are both linked to a particular concept of individual freedom, which is the fundamental objective of the type of social change that the movement is promoting.

### **Mainstreaming Gender in Development: An Institutionalized Approach**

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control (UDHR, Art. 25.1).

Within this framework of human rights, the empowerment approach builds on the discourse of basic human needs by seeking to address inequities in the balance and distribution of power. This type of development focused on empowerment strategies places people at the center of social change. The Human Development Report (HDR) has consistently defined the primary objective of development as “enlarging the choices for all people” (UNDP 1995, 1). The 1995 HDR acknowledges that the exclusion of women from many economic and political opportunities serves as an obstacle to modern progress and recognizes that wide income disparities and gender gaps exemplify the inequities within development processes. The report thus centers on the idea that the human development paradigm “must be fully engendered” (2). It enlists empowerment as one of the three essential components of the human development paradigm, alongside equality and sustainability of opportunity. According to the 1995 HDR, this engendered development model incorporates three fundamental principles (2):

1. Women and men must realize truly equal rights through the removal of legal, economic, political, and cultural barriers that prevent the exercise of equal rights.
2. Women are to be regarded as both agents and beneficiaries of change through investing in their capabilities and “empowering” them to exercise their own choices.
3. Women and men must have equal opportunities to make choices, without predetermining how different cultures and societies exercise these choices.

Institutionalized development programs began to increasingly recognize the centrality of women’s empowerment to social change in the 1990’s. In particular, women’s empowerment has become an essential component of many United Nations declarations and platforms for action in the past two decades. The most recent

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) even incorporated gender mainstreaming in its third goal, stating its objective to “promote gender equality and empower women.” The indicators used to measure progress toward this goal include the ratio of girls to boys at all levels of education, the ratio of literate women to men aged 15-24, the share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sectors, and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (United Nations MDGs). The 2014 Millennium Development Goals Report claims that the world has eliminated gender disparity in primary education, but that few countries have achieved this target in secondary and tertiary education. While it also reveals that women’s political participation has increased in terms of parliamentary representation, the report explains that poverty and violence against women undermine efforts to reach gender equality. Furthermore, women are more often subjected to vulnerable forms of employment with fewer social benefits (POPIN).

As the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup> (SDGs) replace the MDGs beginning this year, the Girl Effect aims to position girl advocates from all around the world to participate in events and voice their needs from the development agenda. The Girl Effect mission statement is the following: “Change the world for girls and enable girls in their unique capacity to change the world” ([girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org)). This entails a “5+1 Theory of Change,” which says that there are five key assets, including education, health, economic security, safety, and voice and rights that determine a girl’s reality as well as one critical catalyst, perception change. The Girl Effect movement posits that it is perception change that “inspires behaviour change that creates empowered lives”

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<sup>3</sup> The seventeen goals that will define the international development agenda until 2030.

(girleffect.org). Therefore, the movement takes a girl-centered approach to create lasting perception change by attempting to harness media and build social networks with the goal of developing girls' positive perceptions of themselves and shifting how others see and value them. In addition, the Girl Effect works with partners around the world to put girls on the global agenda and try to influence governments to explicitly recognize girls in state policies, including health, family planning, education, jobs, entitlement to assets and inheritance. The movement proclaims, "We must not stop until girls are embedded in the SDGs, and decision-makers are held accountable to girls in the resourcing, programme design, implementation and measurement of the new development agenda" (girleffect.org).

In contrast, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has recently modified its approach to gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women by increasingly incorporating boys and men into its work. Its policy discourse recognizes boys and men as powerful allies in achieving gender equality and seeks to promote mutually empowering relationships between girls and boys in both public and private spheres. UNICEF acknowledges that men are often overlooked in activities to promote gender equality despite their traditionally more dominant role in decision-making situations. Furthermore, the organization proposes that

Goals such as joint parenting, prevention of HIV and AIDS, reduction of risk-taking behaviour and women's and girls' empowerment, pre-suppose transformation of male attitudes, roles and behaviour, so the direct involvement of boys and men to advance their own processes of change and transformation is a necessity (UNICEF 8).

With this in mind, UNICEF seeks to create and promote programming with boys' groups that is complementary with that of girls' groups in the same neighborhoods in

order to address relationships among them (UNICEF 8). This represents a more holistic approach toward development that incorporates active participation from members of both genders, which I suggest will be a more effective method to achieve long-term goals in addition to obtain significant short-term results. The outcomes are likely to transcend economic growth in a more holistic approach, including fostering individual well-being, community-based solidarities, interpersonal trust and political representation.

### **Focus on Girls: Unleashing the ‘Girl Effect’**

At first, I believed addressing women in developing countries was the answer. But after more time on the ground, it became clear that once a girl becomes a woman, it’s already too late. She has likely quit school and already has several kids. Game over. Yet before she’s a woman, there’s still a chance. If we were going to break the poverty cycle, we had to start upstream (Maria Eitel, Founding CEO and President of the Nike Foundation).

The notion of the ‘Girl Effect’ was first coined by the Nike Foundation in the mid-2000s when it began to focus its efforts on getting girls on the global agenda. According to the founding CEO and President of the Nike Foundation, Maria Eitel realized during her “learning journey” that poverty was the most important issue of our time. While she first focused on how to address women’s needs in the developing world, Eitel realized that it was difficult to even reach young girls in these nations. She would be told: “Oh, she’s out in the field,” “She’s tending the sheep,” or “She’s at the market” (qtd. in Lean In). To Eitel, it was clear that “‘she’ wasn’t in school, ‘she’ wasn’t available, and ‘she’ certainly wasn’t valued (qtd. in Lean In). Most often the girl’s family would even ask why she would want to talk with her. It was at this point that Eitel realized the importance of channeling resources to adolescent girls and

incorporating them into the larger economic equation. The Nike Foundation's efforts have gone beyond simply educating girls to positioning them as a driving force of social and economic change, claiming that girls hold the key to ending world poverty. The campaign argues that empowering adolescent girls is the most effective way to combat poverty through changing social norms and improving health and life expectancy in the developing world. It states, "It's not complicated. It's just smart economics" (Smart Economics Video).

The Girl Effect movement has had a profound impact on development discourse and policy within just a few years. The majority of key global players in the health and development arena have now adopted the 'girl-powering' agenda. In 2007, the UN Interagency Task Force on adolescent girls was established through a joint collaboration between UNICEF, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The following year, the World Bank founded its Adolescent Girls Initiative, directed toward improving economic opportunities for girls and young women. The role of girls in development became a topic of discussion at Davos in 2009, which is host to an annual meeting of global political and business elites known as the World Economic Forum (WEF). Furthermore, the United Nations (UN) designated the first International Day of the Girl Child in October 2012 with extensive public endorsement from NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) and governmental bodies (Koffman & Gill 84). This 'girl-powering' focus of development is the latest in a succession of gendered development policy waves that have included WID, WAD, and GAD. However, this recent orientation toward 'girl-powering' initiatives does not replace policy preoccupation with gender, but rather represents a prominent

generational focus within it. As girls have gained visibility in contemporary popular culture and governmental literature, discussions of girlhood have increasingly centered around notions of choice, agency, independence and empowerment and their potential to foster economic growth. This focus on the economic potential of investing in adolescent girls has received a great deal of criticism, already suggested by critiques cited above, which I will now further explore.

## **‘Smart Economics’ Approach**

### **Criticism of the Girl Effect Logic**

Even if we accept that smart economics amounts to an efficiency approach with elements of empowerment bolted on to the side, the programmes with which it is associated rely on a reductive understanding of development and its aims, and critically assume a much smoother and easier transition between individual ‘economic empowerment’ and engaging with the social and political structures which constrain individuals — and women as a collective marginalised group — in reality (Chant & Sweetman 523).

Large development organizations like the World Bank are incorporating the language of empowerment into mainstream policy discourse and practice. The 2012 World Development Report (WDR) on Gender Equality selected gender as the framework for analyzing development for the first time in its thirty years of history. In the WDR 2012, the World Bank advances a focus on gender equality as “smart economics” that it originally proposed in its 2007 Gender Action Plan (Zuckerman). The Bank’s core message in promoting women’s empowerment through gender equality is that it is “smart economics” with the potential to enhance productivity and improve development outcomes for the next generation. Despite the World Bank’s stated claim to advance development in terms of meeting the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and women empowerment, critics assert that the Bank’s real focus is to “enhance economic efficiency” and effect productivity gains that contribute to a “competitive and globalized world” (Shain 5). Shain also claims that the report’s argument for women’s social and political empowerment by alleviating gender disparities in education and health is secondary to the primary objective of economic empowerment. Accordingly, it is economic empowerment that will enable girls and



women to ‘become socially and politically active, make decisions and shape policies,’ ultimately leading to more representative and inclusive institutions. The concept of “smart economics” therefore positions the economic empowerment of women as individual workers as a pre-condition for their social and political participation, constructing gender equality as something that is ‘good for the economy’ (Shain 5).

‘Smart economics’ has been met with a wide range of criticisms, including subordinating intrinsic value, ignoring the need for systematic transformation, feminizing responsibility, overemphasizing efficiency, and engaging in opportunistic pragmatism. Chant and Sweetman disagree with development discourse that promotes investment in women as having instrumental utility, stating that “it is imperative to ask whether the goal of female investment is primarily to promote gender equality and women’s ‘empowerment’, or to facilitate development ‘on the cheap’, and/or to promote further economic liberalization” (521). They voice concern that the WDR 2012 recognizes the importance of gender equality in its utility for development and ultimately in terms of economic growth rather than focusing on the intrinsic value of gender equality objectives. According to this perspective, smart economics conflates efficiency and rights through utilitarianism. The feminist agenda of promoting women’s empowerment by giving voice and visibility to poor women has been converted into a neoliberal instrument to “use them as easy, efficient, less risky constituencies of developmental interventions and to increase women’s overall work burdens” (Dogra 340). According to this view, the instrumental use of women in development discourse thus focuses on *efficiency* for achieving specific political and economic ends. Many scholars criticize this approach for endorsing the current status quo of gender inequality

rather than demanding institutional reform. They claim that it does not involve public action to transform the legal, political, and social structures that constrain individual and collective agency.

Critics of smart economics argue that the Girl Effect movement makes the ‘business case’ for gender equality and women’s empowerment by emphasizing the economic imperative and broader socioeconomic impact of its initiatives. In fact, the Nike Foundation purports that investing in adolescent girls is the catalyst for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, translating into economic growth and community wellbeing. The Girl Effect claims, “If every Ethiopian girl finished her education before starting work, it would add \$4 billion USD to the country's economy. That's more than Ethiopia receives in aid in a year” ([girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org)). This message projects a neoliberal logic of good economic sense where girls are socially constructed as an instrument of development. The Nike Foundation partnered with the World Bank to support the August 2011 release of a report titled, “Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend.” This policy research paper attempts to quantify the opportunity cost, in financial terms, of girls’ exclusion from productive employment and explore the connection between investing in girls and increasing national income through an examination of three areas of adolescent girls’ lives: early school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and joblessness (Chaaban & Cunningham). The effect of this economically oriented rhetoric is to present girls as lucrative investment opportunities that is more likely to yield ‘higher returns.’ Appendix B presents an infographic of the Girl Effect dividend.

The feminist critique of this smart economics approach to development is that it attempts to use women and girls to fix the world (Chant & Sweetman 523). Smart economics assumes that women are capable of driving economic growth and stability amid the ongoing gender barriers and structural barriers that restrict their agency. Chant et al. further clarify that, “It is less welcome to women who are already contributing vast amounts to both production and unpaid reproduction to be romanticised and depicted as the salvation of the world” (523). They also voice concern over the efficiency-driven agenda of smart economics, which homogenizes the female population into productive young women and girls while fallaciously neglecting the lives of elderly women or those with handicaps. Chant et al. call for the recognition of equal rights of all women and girls as well as collaborating with men and boys to enact social, political, and economic change (524). Like Chant et al., Associate Professor Lamia Karim advocates for a more holistic approach to human development. She claims that segmenting the population by directing resources toward one group not only increases attention on them, but also makes them vulnerable. Boys and men are being isolated by initiatives that focus on the other half of the population, which can be viewed as a threat to community structures and cause backlash against women through increased violence. Karim asserts, “Girls should not be the social engines of change. They should be a future that society is invested in—young girls and boys.” Smart economics oversimplifies complexity and shifts responsibility of human development to women and girls, essentially enlisting them as ‘foot soldiers’ to fight battles whose aims often differ from women’s own interests and are expected to translate into the improved wellbeing of their children and family (Molyneux 439). Critics of this agenda for

development warn against strategies that approach gender equality through the lens of smart economics, arguing that it, “may have attractions in strategic terms, enabling us to access resources for work focusing on supporting the individual agency of women and girls, but risks aggravating many of the complex problems that gender and development seeks to transform” (Chant & Sweetman 526).

### **Analyzing the Girl Effect Theory of Change**

The Girl Effect movement posits that adolescent girls are an “untapped resource” for development and suggests that by investing in a girl, “she will do the rest” to pull herself, her family, her community, and her country out of poverty. This conceptualization of ‘girl power’ claims that girls are capable of alleviating world poverty as well as transforming health and life expectancy around the world. The Girl Effect theory of change implies that girls who are healthy and well educated are more likely to marry later in life and have fewer children, eventually improving their economic prospects and the health of their children. This, in turn, will improve family health and life expectancy and ultimately transform the economic situation of developing nations. In the original Girl Effect video, the viewer is first asked to imagine a girl living in poverty who is associated with images of ‘hunger,’ ‘HIV,’ and ‘babies.’ Then the video replaces this image with the socio-economic construction of a girl who has received a loan to buy a cow. The video portrays the story of this girl, explaining:

She uses the profits from the milk to help her family. Pretty soon the cow becomes a herd. And she becomes the business owner who brings clean water to the village, which makes men respect her good sense and invite her to the village council, where she convinces everyone that all girls are valuable. Soon more girls have a change and the village is thriving. Healthier babies, peace, lower HIV, food, education, commerce,

sanitation, stability. Which means the economy of the entire country improves and the world is better off (The Girl Effect Video 2008).

However, critics assert that this simple messaging implies that there is a single solution for a complex set of problems and that oversimplification itself threatens to undermine efforts to tackle the root causes and consequences of power imbalances. According to Koffman and Gill, this narrative portrays the unleashing of girls' entrepreneurial spirits as a 'liberating force' of neoliberalism that is capable of defeating hundreds of years of patriarchy (85). Within this neoliberal discourse on development, the construction of impoverished girls and women as 'enterprising' subjects focuses on their individual agency rather than their collective struggles. Furthermore, Koffman and Gill assert that linking together discourses of girl power, individualism, entrepreneurial subjectivity and consumerism with rhetorics of 'revolution' paradoxically "renders invisible the inequalities, uneven power relations and structural features of neoliberal capitalism that produce the very global injustices the Girl Effect purports to challenge" (84).

From a feminist, postcolonial approach that recognizes global inequalities as gendered and racialized constructions, the Girl Effect can be viewed as an assemblage of development policy discourse dominated by neoliberal ideologies that often reinforces economic inequalities rather than mitigating them (Koffman & Gill 83). This position argues that the current global shift toward neoliberal economic policies espoused by international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, indicates a similar growing focus on the Girl Effect movement discourse as a means of shaping the relationship between the Global North and South. According to Koffman and Gill, the Girl Effect's discourse highlights the contrast

between ‘empowered’ girls in the Global North and the ‘downtrodden victims of patriarchal values’ in the Global South (84). They argue that girls in the US are portrayed as ‘active, empowered free agents’ while girls in the Global South are depicted as vulnerable actors constrained by a lack of individual freedom. Furthermore, the movement acknowledges the exclusion of girls from the public sphere in the Global South where they are often burdened with domestic chores, including carrying water, gathering wood, and taking care of the young, old and sick while also assisting with small farming activities, such as scaring birds away from crops. The Girl Effect movement intends to eliminate barriers to girls’ life chances, which it identifies primarily as being constituted by cultural beliefs and practices that favor boys. One such example that the movement provides is the failure of families in the developing world to invest in girls’ education because they are not viewed as future economic actors ([girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org)). It is this focus on gender inequality that Koffman and Gill suggest that the Girl Effect discourse exports a Northern construction of girlhood to cultural categories of adolescence in the South (84). It seeks to promote a notion of female adolescence as a period of time spent toward education rather than marriage or childbearing. In particular, this conviction is captured by the movement’s powerful claim that the ‘revolution will be led by a 12-year-old girl’ who has been ‘reached’ and ‘helped’ before ‘the ticking clock’ has led her to marriage and pregnancy, enabling her to transform her own life chances and those of her community and nation (The Girl Effect Video 2008).

Within a postcolonial context, the Girl Effect theory of change is reflective of a larger neo-imperialist model as it depends on depicting girls in the developing world as

victims of patriarchal culture (Koffman & Gill 84-85). Dogra posits that this portrayal of girls and women as victims reproduces the colonial perception of the ‘backwardness’ of women in the developing world and the advancement of women in the developed world while eluding the ‘deep connected histories that shape current global inequalities.’ The effect of this representation of women in the developing world is to naturalize their lives and struggles and ‘freeze’ them in time, space, and history while promoting a universalized notion of their societies as homogenous and discrete entities (Dogra 346).

Koffman and Gill also criticize the ‘biopolitical strategy’ of the Girl Effect that creates an explicit connection between ‘empowerment,’ ‘fertility,’ and the economic wellbeing of individual subjects and nations (84). The movement’s focus on adolescent girls stems from the process of sexual and reproductive maturation that occurs in girls’ lives at this stage. In many regions of the developing world, young women often marry shortly after puberty, which signals the potential of motherhood for girls. Many societies even support and encourage early marriage as being in a girl’s and her family’s best interest, often leading to childbirth during a girls’ teenage years (Buvinic et al. 12). The young girl who becomes a mother fulfills traditional gender roles that typically interrupt her education and therefore undermine her future earnings. Furthermore, “Young mothers often transmit their own restricted future to their offspring,” passing on their educational disadvantage and ill health to their children (Buvinic et al. 13). Adolescent motherhood also has the tendency to reproduce itself as some evidence shows that children of adolescent mothers are more likely to become adolescent mothers themselves (Buvinic et al. 14). The Girl Effect movement discourse identifies

this pattern as a key component for reinforcing the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The UN Adolescent Girls Task Force proclaims that ‘educated, healthy and skilled adolescent girls’ will “stay in school, marry later, delay childbearing, have healthier children, and earn better incomes that will benefit themselves, their families, communities and nations” (UN Joint Statement). Furthermore, international development policy echoes the Girl Effect’s theory of change that is largely founded on the assumption that “Investing in their [girls’] rights and empowerment will help accelerate the achievement of internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (UN Joint Statement).

This narrative constructs women and girls as political subjects through a universalizing image of life in the developing world as plagued by child marriage, teenage motherhood, and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. It assumes that education will inevitably lead to girls choosing to delay marriage and childbearing, which in turn will improve their children’s health (Koffman & Gill 88). It also tends to overlook the wide variation in education, marriage, and fertility patterns in developing countries across the world as well as the idea that some women may value early motherhood or a large family. By drawing on Western policy literature that emphasizes women’s domestic role and high fertility, critics of the Girl Effect ideology claim that this theory of change largely fails to acknowledge the historical and structural dimensions of poverty and instead reinforces a system of cultural imperialism. Rather, its concern with ‘third world women’s fertility’ reflects the colonial discourses of the ‘fecundity’ of indigenous women (Dogra 336). Meanwhile, much of the Western world has experienced a decline in birth rates as a growing number of professional women are



choosing to delay childbirth and have fewer children (Koffman & Gill 88). It is within this context that preventing ‘teenage motherhood’ has become a Western policy objective, which in turn has materialized in development policy discourse. As girls and women in the developing world are constructed as ideal neoliberal subjects who are more responsible and worthy of investment than their male counterparts, critics argue this: “reproduces classed and colonial ideas about the deserving or undeserving poor: girls are the ‘unexpected solution’ to ‘the world’s problems’ as the Girl Effect would have it, because they will buy a cow, not alcohol or cigarettes” (Koffman & Gill 89).

### **A Corporate Humanitarian Agenda**

Much of what we have done with the Girl Effect stems from Nike and our corporate culture. We feel like we are in the business of building a movement and we are serious about how to truly support girls. We are not looking for a quick win, and we know we can’t do it by ourselves (Emily Brew, Nike Foundation Brand Creative Director).

Skeptics of the Nike Foundation’s motivation to develop the Girl Effect movement often voice concern that investing extensive resources in adolescent girls is merely a creative philanthropic strategy to raise awareness for the Nike brand. For many, the Girl Effect initiative is an example of cause marketing or purpose marketing. This term refers to the process of corporate support for pro-social causes that they identify as an improvement to the world, while congruently enhancing how current and prospective customers perceive them in order to increase profitability (Elliott). The Nike brand is well known for its innovation and sophisticated design and performance and the design and branding of the Girl Effect movement is no exception. Nike is now applying this expertise to help pioneer a relatively new attitude toward supporting the cause of girls and women around the world, which appears congruent with the

company's heralded image as "a champion of human potential." As the vice president and managing director of the Nike Foundation, Leslie Lane, explains, it is the "Nike way" to "pick some really big issue" to work on (qtd. in Elliott).

As such, the Nike Foundation has received heavy criticism for its focus on adolescent girls, with the notion that girls are being recruited into a 'Nike ideology' that promotes a certain type of girl culture with specific values. One such value is that of individual choice, which critics say reinforces Nike's agenda to create new consumer citizens by targeting young girls in impoverished countries. Nike is a for-profit, multi-billion dollar company that operates in 120 countries. Most people believe that a corporation's loyalty to its shareholders always comes first and, therefore, that corporations choose strategies for the sole purpose of increasing shareholder dividends. From this perspective, the Girl Effect movement is a project aimed at creating new subscribers of a market ideology and, a new future market segment in developing countries while also gaining profits from seeming to be philanthropic about an issue that current market segments care about. In countries where the school system and government is failing girls, Nike has the resources and money to provide them with a new kind of structured environment. As Karim postulates, "Nike is promoting capitalism and markets. That is their interest. They're doing it through the empowerment of young girls who will grow up to become empowered but who will also become consumers of Nike products." Critics of the corporate humanitarian agenda also suggest that this development initiative is an important component of Nike's global branding and corporate strategy as it is designed to extend its markets (primarily in Africa) while rehabilitating a Western image that has been undermined by unfair labor

practices accusations (Hayhurst). When asked, ‘What is in it for Nike?’, Lane acknowledged that “There’s obviously a benefit to the brand when people say Nike and the Nike Foundation is behind it” (qtd in Elliott). However, Lane adds that Nike does not have a ‘commercial footprint in a significant way’ in the countries that the Girl Effect is intended to reach. In addition, Lane claims that the initiative is not intended to “offset any issues” that arise in discussions of labor practices between consumers and Nike (Elliott).

According to Nike Foundation Brand Creative Director, Emily Brew, “Nonprofit brands have traditionally used their brands for fundraising and corporate foundation brands are interested in their corporate brand image” (Kylander 2). However, she explains that the Nike Foundation’s approach to developing the Girl Effect is more about leveraging Nike’s capabilities and strengths in innovation to address issues outside of the company’s commercial interests. The Nike Foundation purports to be interested in more than just writing checks, striving to use the skills acquired at Nike Inc. to maximize the impact of their small foundation. “We wanted to be a catalyst to drive demand creation,” states Brew, “we wanted a lot of people to get on board and create that demand with us” (Kylander 2). Furthermore, the foundation has adopted an open source approach, making the conscious decision to exclude the Nike “swoosh” in its branding and attempting to underplay the Nike brand connection. “For Nike to abandon the swoosh was a paradigm shift for us,” explains Brew, “but we learned from our previous successful experience with the Armstrong’s yellow wrist band, that we wanted to build a much bigger tent” (Kylander 4). In response to skeptics who have claimed that the initiative has commercial intent, Lane explains that the Girl

Effect is intentionally “not branded as Nike” so that the movement can more directly address public policy issues without seeming to be directed by Nike’s business needs (Elliott). As a 501(c)(3) private foundation established by Nike to support charitable and educational initiatives, it is important to acknowledge that the Nike Foundation does derive its funds from the contributions of the profit-making business, Nike Inc. However, the Foundation is a separate, legal organization whose principal fund is managed by its own board of directors, making grants to other organizations for charitable purposes.

As of the first of September, the Girl Effect became its own organization and appointed its first CEO (Girl Effect News Release). The Nike Foundation has even gone a step further to separate the Nike brand from the Girl Effect’s core initiatives in Africa by creating a strategic collaboration with the Department for International Development (DFID) under a new brand name: The Girl Hub. Since the concept of branding is very new in Rwanda and Ethiopia, much of the efforts of Ni Nyampinga magazine and *Yegna* radio show are aimed at creating a positive brand association with adolescent girls (Lagat). According to the Nike Foundation, Ni Nyampinga and *Yegna* are platforms intended to directly connect “girl champions” with one another, but their long term sustainability is dependent on continued engagement with the brand. The Foundation therefore recognizes that ultimately these platforms must be led by girls themselves in order to achieve long term success (Kylander).

## **Notions of Power, Agency, and Empowerment and their Intersections**

The concepts of power, agency, and empowerment are key to evaluating the potential of the Girl Effect movement. The Nike Foundation argues that the empowerment of girls through increased agency is the best way to tackle global poverty. According to the Foundation, agency means, “the ability to act and fulfill potentials in society; to have and make use of life opportunities, and to have voice and take part in decision-making” (Crawford 9). However, these terms of empowerment and agency are multifaceted, relational concepts that need further exploration, particularly when used to quantify measures of impact within a relatively new social movement. Empowerment must also be considered within systems of social, economic, and political structures that constrain and enable certain kinds of agency as well as the potential for development. The most significant barriers preventing girls from exercising their agency includes infrastructural deficiencies, weak or repressive government, and patriarchal structures dictated by strong gender norms, such as child marriage, barriers to education, and gender based violence. The Girl Effect hopes to leverage girls’ agency by changing local perceptions of girls that dictate restrictive social norms and gender expectations, therefore elevating the perceived “value” of girls in their societies in order to guide political agendas toward more girl-focused development. In addition, the movement believes its social communications platforms will empower girls by increasing their self-confidence and inspiring them to make use of life opportunities. As agency is entwined with conceptions of power, we must first consider notions of power and empowerment to evaluate the potential of the Girl Effect movement to increase girls’ agency.

## **Power**

Despite the central role of “empowerment” in the discourse and practice of development, this complex term lacks a universal definition, which makes it available to multiple interpretations and uses. The concept of empowerment is multidimensional and has diverse meanings depending on the socio-cultural and political context in which it operates. While imposing a single definition of empowerment on a term that is subjective, flexible and personal is both limiting and contradicting, it is important to understand this concept from a development context in which it functions as an assessable measurement. Also, when invoked in policy considerations, policy makers, including foundation managers, need to define the term if they intend to measure any outcomes in relation to it. Most theories of empowerment examine the notion of power as the central component of empowerment. Michel Foucault offers a postmodern view of power claiming that power is an inescapable phenomenon in which “power is everywhere” and functions “not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1990, 93). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault challenges the repressive nature of power embedded in discourse of domination and subordination, instead positing the productive principle of power as a “regime of truth” that is constantly negotiated within society (194). He writes,

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true... the means by which each is sanctioned... (Foucault 1980, 131).

In this sense, knowledge and power share an intrinsic connection as power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge considered to be “truth.” Foucault also points to a disciplinary power mechanism, known as ‘technologies of the self,’ to create a body of knowledge and behavior that define normal, acceptable, and deviant practices. Thus, Foucault’s approach to power transcends politics as it postulates power as a socialized, embodied phenomenon that circulates in everyday life and that establishes the very structures within which various forms of agency come into being. Accordingly, the concept of gender, being a girl, and the subjectivity of girlhood is produced and transformed by discourses about gender and girls. If people have a tendency to become what they already are “known” to be within the discourses preceding them, then, to the extent that the Nike Foundation’s discourse about girlhood becomes dominant within girls’ lives, girls themselves become subjects to the Nike Foundation’s discourse of girlhood. Since the Girl Effect claims that girls need to be empowered, then they are already constituted as subjects who lack power. From this critical perspective, the discourse of empowerment may itself be disempowering girls. While this will be further discussed in a later section, it is important to note that agency is not only possible, but it is impossible not to have agency within this constant negotiation of knowledge within which agency is constructed by one’s location in the discourse.

Many other writers argue that the use and distribution of power is an important element of understanding underdevelopment and poverty and is essential to achieving social transformation. Within the context of development, there are two predominant interpretations of power as a means for change. The first interpretation follows Freire’s

theory of “the culture of silence” that is characterized by the dependence and marginalization of subjects that lack power (Freire 30). According to Freire, individuals become “subjects” in their own lives as they develop a “critical consciousness,” or awareness, of their personal circumstances and the socio-political environment that reinforces their oppression (36). It is through the realization of critical consciousness that Freire believes the culture of silence can be overcome by action enabling access to real power. The Girl Effect leverages social communications platforms to create space for discourse about the value of girls and greater girl participation in society with critical consciousness as a significant intended outcome. By this I mean that the communications platforms intend to draw girls’ awareness to the gender inequalities that have historically privileged men and boys over women and girls and continue to reinforce their marginalized positions in society. As such, these platforms are meant to serve as “a vehicle for liberation from mental and psychological shackles that bind the people to structures and processes of oppression” (Melkote & Steeves 339). The idea is that girls have the power to show and speak their own realities, which mirror the social and political realities that influence people’s lives in their community. This exposure to social realities is expected to lead to Freire’s concept of critical consciousness, enabling a process of attitudinal and behavioral change.

The second interpretation of power as a means for change is based on four components of power. The first component understands power as a relationship of domination and subordination with the notion that power necessitates a “zero-sum” game (Craig & Mayo). This means that power is a fixed quantity, where one must inevitably lose power in order for another to gain power. We can refer to this dynamic



as the ‘power over’ dimension of empowerment, characterized as having control over some one and something (Moffat et al. 234). A more constructive interpretation of how power operates consists of three additional components: power to, power with, and power within (Moffat et al.).

4. *Power to*: The essence of individual empowerment that is characterized by working on improving one’s abilities, skills, and capabilities. This involves gaining access to decision-making authority, leadership ability, capacity building, as well as understanding the power dynamics that function within a subject’s own life context.
5. *Power within*: The realization of self-acceptance and self-respect that stem from spiritual strength and enable respect for and acceptance of others as equals, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses that reside in everyone
6. *Power with*: The collective organization of power that is driven by uniting around a common purpose or understanding. This form of power is characterized by the sense that more can be achieved by a group acting together than by individuals alone.

Moffat et al.’s interpretive framework of power as a means for change transforms the passive subject into an active individual within development. The foundation of empowerment involves Freire’s idea of “conscientization,” the process by which subjects understand their marginalized reality and become aware of their internalized oppression, as embodied in the ‘power over’ dynamic. Empowerment goes beyond simply gaining access to formal and informal decision-making. As Rowlands explains, “It must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space” (102). In this way, empowerment also encompasses the categories of ‘power to’ and power within’ where subjects realize their capacity and internalize their right to act and influence the world around them. ‘Power with’ will also be an important dimension in the analysis of the

Girl Effect communications platforms, particularly as it relates to overcoming structural constraints, including a lack of or weak enforcement of government policies, infrastructural deficiencies, and institutionalized gender inequalities. I will primarily use Moffat et al.'s four components of power to analyze the concept of empowerment, including both individual and collective elements.

### **Empowerment**

In a 'power over' conception of empowerment, significant social change is only made possible by directly challenging the existing patterns of power. Social change refers to the alteration through time of cultural patterns, such as social norms that dictate expected habits and behaviors, and social structure, or networks of social relationships in which interaction between people or groups becomes repetitive in nature (Harper & Leicht). The Girl Effect states that, "Women's and girl's equality and empowerment are paramount to socio-economic development, poverty reduction, and improved standards of living" (The Adolescent Experience In-depth 62). In Rwanda, they have used three indicators to represent the empowerment of young females, including access and exposure to information through the mass media, access to health care, and autonomy in decision-making within the household. It is believed that girls can be empowered with the opportunity to express their voices through stories in the media to help them shift various societal norms around the treatment of girls. In addition, regular and equitable access to health care is identified as a crucially important to individual wellbeing and to the development of the society as a whole (The Adolescent Experience In-depth 63). Furthermore, the Girl Effect states that a female's ability to make decisions on her own or with a partner is vital to her self-esteem and

self-worth (power within and power with) and therefore has a significant impact on her success in areas of work, education, civic participation and familial care (The Adolescent Experience In-depth 65). Since women tend to spend more than men of the household income on their children's health and education, the movement argues that control over earnings is an important factor for reducing the prevalence of malnourishment and other poor health outcomes as well as school dropout rates. In this conception of empowerment, improvement in access to media, health care, and decision-making capabilities in the household are interpreted as having both human and economic development purposes.

The language of empowerment has been appropriated by the Nike Foundation, reflecting the understanding that participation and empowerment “are the essential building blocks for grassroots, people-oriented transformative development” (Parpart 44). The Girl Effect movement assumes that individual awareness and strength will lead to problem solving capacities and productive association with others. This implies that changing the nature of social behaviors, relations, and institutions within communities can facilitate greater individual agency. Interpreting empowerment in this way can overemphasize the individual and reduce the importance of the collective. The Girl Effect theory of change tends to be more individualistic, as it invests in girls' capabilities to “empower” them to exercise their own choices over their lives. Individualism itself can be disempowering, particularly when power exists in the capacities of entire communities of people who identify with one another. Especially in societies that tend to be more collectively oriented, development programming has to respect the importance of group identification by strengthening both individual and

communal social capital. Therefore, in addition to the ‘power to’ and ‘power within’ components of empowerment, I argue that the ‘power with’ dimension is essential to achieving transformative development. This type of development entails change at a societal level, which I believe requires a combination of all four of Moffat et al.’s dimensions of power, including ‘power over,’ ‘power to,’ ‘power within,’ and ‘power with.’

Consistent with Moffat et al.’s conceptualization of ‘power with,’ Rowlands expands the vision of empowerment to incorporate relational and collective elements. Whereas the individual dimension of empowerment (power within) consists of developing a sense of self-value, the relational aspect is about negotiating the nature of relationships and the collective implies that individuals work together to achieve a greater impact than subjects working alone (Rowlands 103). Relational empowerment thus embodies ‘power to’ the subject as the individual becomes aware of how their own interests relate to those of others. Collective empowerment goes a step further to incorporate ‘power with’ others in uniting interests to achieve greater influence over decision-making. Friedmann’s definition of empowerment, which includes psychological, social, and political dimensions, also fits within this framework by focusing on both individual and collective elements to overcome poverty (Friedmann 116). Friedmann’s psychological dimension entails individual empowerment while his social and political dimensions are collective forms of empowerment. In this sense, empowerment requires gaining access to individual opportunity as well as removing external constraints that limit the potential to realize opportunities. While external societal constraints can restrict autonomy, such as familial, economic, societal, cultural,

and political factors, individuals may also internalize constraints through preferences and self-perceptions. Therefore, empowerment viewed within this framework can be realized through enhancing individual abilities, reducing societal constraints, or removing individual restrictions.

The empowerment process is complicated by the power dynamic between outside professionals of financially powerful organizations and development agencies and their intended beneficiaries. For instance, the Nike Foundation does have ‘power over’ the girls they seek to influence with their programming. However, this is not to say that beneficiaries do not retain their own forms of agency or do not actively avoid conforming to socioeconomic subjectivities that programs seek to promote. In order to achieve long-term and sustainable change, development agencies and organizations may facilitate empowerment by creating the space and conditions for and removing barriers to empowerment efforts, but empowerment must ultimately manifest from local subjects pursuing their own ends by their own means.

### **Agency**

The process of realizing and acting on decision-making capacities through ‘power to’ and ‘power within’ dimensions of power is thought to constitute individual agency. The concept of agency is often used to embody and expand the discourse and practice of empowerment within a development context. Kabeer claims that agency is the heart of the process behind decision-making as it encompasses “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them” (21). As a kind of process freedom, an agent is ‘someone who acts and brings about change’ (qtd. in Ibrahim & Alkire 383). Agency supersedes observable action, embodying a sense of ‘power within’ that characterizes

the meaning, motivation, and purpose of individual activities. Furthermore, actions that stem from agency are influenced by a process of reflection and analysis that entails both individual and collective elements (Kabeer 21).

Similarly, the Spanish based think-tank on humanitarian action and development, F.R.I.D.E. (Fundación Para Las Relaciones Internacionales Y El Diálogo Exterior), defines agency as “an individual’s or group’s ability to define its objectives and act based on these.” This ability “is not limited exclusively to the act of making a decision but rather, it includes a previous phase implying motivation and the objective for carrying out that activity” (FRIDE 4). The notion of agency has a positive and negative dimension in relation to the concept of power. In the positive dimension of ‘power to,’ agency entails the capacity to define one’s life choices and to pursue the alternative that best satisfies the individual or group’s objectives, despite potential opposition from others. This element of ‘power to’ also implies that one has access to and control over resources that affect important life outcomes. In negative terms, agency can be exercised in a ‘power over’ sense in which an individual or group uses its power to override the agency of others through coercive measures, threats, or violence (Kabeer 21). A third alternative is that power operates without any explicit agency. This is evident in actions that respond to unquestioned social norms or customs and do not require any reflective processes prior to making the decision. In this case, the “norms and rules governing social behaviour tend to ensure that certain outcomes are reproduced without any apparent exercise of agency” (Kabeer 21). Kabeer notes that this instance of power denies choice, and therefore agency, because people’s ability to make strategic life choices is constrained by ruling out the possibility of certain choices

(Kabeer et. al 172). This results in the tendency of subordinate subjects to naturalize prevailing power relations, accepting their role in society when the alternative implies heavy personal and social costs or otherwise does not appear possible, and participating actively in their own disempowerment through daily actions that reproduce existing power relations.

According to this perspective, agency alone is often insufficient to achieve comprehensive empowerment because of the multiple socio-political structures within societies that frame and limit the potential of individual agency. Kabeer explains that “power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice, but also through the kinds of choices people make” (24). This notion of power and agency implies that it is possible for dominant structures to operate through consent and complicity in addition to coercion and conflict. Where gender inequalities signal a paradigm of domination and subordination, the relationship between choice and power is not inherently limited to the female absence of choice as the subordinate group or solely determined by male active discrimination as the dominant group. For instance, in many situations where significant gender inequalities reflect striking differences in basic wellbeing, the equation between power and choice is strengthened women internalizing their social status as subjects of lesser value, diminishing their sense of their own rights and entitlements (24). Kabeer provides examples of this dynamic between agency and choice in which women undermine their own wellbeing, including:

Women’s acceptance of their secondary claims on household resources, their acquiescence to violence at the hands of their husbands, their willingness to bear children to the detriment of their own health and survival to satisfy their own or their husband’s preference for sons (24).

While these forms of behavior may be considered to reflect ‘choice,’ they must also be viewed within a framework of choices that manifest from women’s subordinate status and serve to reinforce existing power structures. Individuals are expected to internalize and behave in accordance with the social norms of their society through processes of socialization. For instance, even where women can legally own property, they may choose not to do so in order to avoid becoming social outcasts. In other cases, such as in Rwanda and Ethiopia, girls that take an interest in math or science are directed away from certain studies and jobs within these fields due to social norms suggesting that boys are better suited. Women then enter a more limited range of jobs that tend to have lower barriers to entry, less stability, and lower wages, reinforcing the circle of inequality. Therefore, the Girl Effect movement primarily focuses on changing social norms that reinforce gender inequalities, as they act as powerful prescriptions for how men and women are expected to behave. The Nike Foundation recognizes that adolescent girls in poor countries often play pivotal roles in their families and communities that tend to get overlooked. This includes daily cooking, cleaning, fetching water, doing agricultural work, and caring for children and the elderly, which allows other family members to have more time to work and earn money. However, providing these services entails costs to the girls themselves, and the Nike Foundation argues, to their families and eventually to future generations. The reasoning follows that denying opportunities to girls prevents them from reaching their full potential.

According to the Nike Foundation, agency is “The ability to act and fulfill potentials in society; to have and make use of life opportunities, and to have voice and take part in decision-making” (Crawford 9). This definition of agency alludes to a



neoliberal vision of what potential is for adolescent girls. At the Girl Learning Summit, Girl Hub Rwanda Country Director, Kate Wedgewood, said, “For a Rwandan girl to fulfill her potential she must graduate secondary school, she must be free from violence, she must be able to make informed choices about her sexual and reproductive health, and have access and control over economic assets” (Girl Learning Summit Video). This interpretation of one’s potential is exclusive and limits one’s ability to increase their agency. For the Nike Foundation, agency is achieved by ensuring that girls and women have a voice in their societies in order to obtain equal participation. This includes the capacity to speak up and be heard, both within households and at the state level, as well as the ability to participate in and shape discussions and decision-making processes that affect them. Conversely, the Foundation argues that constraining girls’ and women’s agency by subjecting them to violence or limiting what jobs they can perform creates immense losses in productivity and income measures. While agency has multiple dimensions and is inevitably context specific, Girl Hub focuses on four central domains of girl’s agency, which includes freedom from violence, control over sexual and reproductive health, economic activity, and education (Girl Hub Logframe). The Nike Foundation, therefore, argues that overcoming these types of deprivations and constraints is central to alleviating extreme poverty. At the same time, the rhetoric in the Girl Effect theory of change acknowledges that this process of change is not predicated on a zero-sum game. Rather than curtailing men’s agency through increasing women’s agency, the Nike Foundation assumes that boys and men will gain from greater gender equality that improves the economic well-being of all household members. Again, it is

evident that the movement's interpretation of agency operates within a larger framework of economic development.

Conversely, Sen's "capability approach" has received increasing attention in development policies aimed at poverty reduction as it adopts an intrinsic valuation of agency, positing that this capability to act freely and make choices is directly conducive to well-being (Nussbaum & Sen 38-39). He identifies democratic participation as a crucial expression of agency and notes its constructive importance in facilitating the exchange of information and perspectives between people in a manner that can change their values and preferences. In Sen's account of agency, "the practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities" (Sen 10). According to Sen's framework, agency constitutes a process of "opportunity freedoms" or capabilities whose expansion serves as the objective of development. In relation to Kabeer's understanding of empowerment as a process of change from a prior condition of disempowerment, empowerment can be conceived as the expansion of agency (Ibrahim & Alkire, 384-385). As people are significant actors in this process of change, empowerment can be understood as requiring an agency role. Kabeer et. al assert, "Agency in relation to empowerment implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations" (172). In this thesis, I propose that transformative development requires expanding forms of agency that initiate individual and collective empowerment and lead to the greater ability of impoverished women to question, analyze, and act on patriarchal structures that constrain their lives through systematic gender inequalities. This requires a human development approach that recognizes gender inequality as a

relational issue that needs to be addressed within the framework of structural inequality and involves the participation of not just women, but also by governments, development institutions, and wider society, including men and boys.

### **Agency and Structure**

A multitude of social, economic, and political structures challenge individual agency as well as the potential for transformative development. At the most fundamental level, these constraints manifest themselves in the denial of basic freedoms that enable survival. Many others prevent access to adequate health care, to sanitary arrangements, or even to clean water. In other cases, people lack basic opportunities to a functional education system, gainful employment, or economic and social security. It is important to remember that these types of limitations are not restricted to the so-called ‘third world,’ as there are disadvantaged people in both rich and poor countries. Structural constraints are not just derived from the character and distribution of resources, but are also culturally determined. For instance, cultural norms, gender roles, and well established behaviors and attitudes toward girls and boys can restrict agency. In many developing countries, the transition to adulthood occurs during puberty, at which point girls are often expected to be prepared for marriage and soon after, motherhood.

A myriad of other cultural and social norms hold back women and girls within patriarchal power structures. While women and girls constitute half of the agricultural labor force in low-income countries, they tend to lack the same access to labor, fertilizer, extension services, and seeds as male farmers (Bread for the World 44). Rural women also tend to be responsible for a greater share of the labor burden compared to

men, including a higher proportion of unpaid household work like preparing food and collecting fuel and water. According to Bread for the World Institute, women and girls in Africa spend an average of 40 billion hours per year just fetching water (78). In addition to the greater domestic labor burden placed on women, land ownership is heavily tilted toward men in the developing world. While land is one of the most important household assets for rural women to help support their families and provide for food and income security, legal and cultural constraints in land inheritance, ownership and use often favor men at the exclusion of women (Bread for the World 43). Another area in which girls tend to be disadvantaged in comparison to boys includes access to education. One of the most significant factors that prevents girls from obtaining an education is the cultural expectation that girls fulfill household duties. When women and girls do not have access to education or information, they cannot influence research agendas that benefit other women and girls, and are less likely to adopt new practices and technologies.

It is important to recognize that these gender roles are socially constructed identities that are powerfully reinforced by the social activities that both define and are defined by them. As Sewell writes in his theory of structure, “Structures... are constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action” (27). The difficulty of changing the relative position of men and women in society is culturally contingent, but the patriarchal power relations that characterize the societies that I am looking at tend to be deeply embedded in social institutions that discriminate against women. While women and girls continue to face discrimination and prejudice on the basis of

their sex, many also face additional barriers to their development through social exclusion on such grounds as ethnicity, race and class. As structures act to determine or limit agents in their ability to make decisions over their lives, they are neither free to act as they please, nor are they completely shaped and governed by structures. Sewell explains, “Agents are empowered by structures, both by the knowledge of cultural schemas that enables them to mobilize resources and by the access to resources that enables them to enact schemas” (27).

The dynamic rather than static nature of macrostructural processes makes it possible for individuals to exercise agency within cultural and systematic constraints. Individuals are the acting units in societies even though macrostructural processes may affect how they think, feel, and act. According to Coleman, this stems from two levels of social reality. The first is that individual agents constitute communities, groups or movements. The second is that structures are created by abstract ‘wholes,’ which includes organizations, institutions, societies, cultures, socioeconomic classes, and systems (Coleman 251). Within any set of structural arrangements lies the inherent potential for change. From a structuralist standpoint, patriarchal power relations systematically exclude and subordinate women from many aspects of society and the economy in a manner that determines the position and behavior of women through structure. However, this approach underestimates the reflexivity and autonomy of individual actions and does not take into account the ambiguity and ambivalence of human experience. Agency implies that people may act independently of and in opposition to structural constraints and may even reconstitute social structures through their freely chosen actions (Loyal & Barnes 507). Therefore, structure and agency are

mutually dependent and internally related constructs in which structure exists only through agency and agents have 'rules and resources' between them that may facilitate or constrain their actions (Giddens 258). While individual actions are embedded in social contexts which causally influence their nature, I posit that agency may be exercised by the contingently acting subject over and against structural constraints. This relationship between agency and structural constraints implies that structures continue to exist only if they are sustained by repeated and purposive actions, which provides a framework within which to explain social change and transformative development.

This thesis adopts the idea that power functions as a variable sum within society and that empowerment of formerly powerless subjects does not necessitate negative effects for those possessing power. Furthermore, I postulate that transformative development requires challenging existing societal structures that restrict widespread empowerment. This means taking a comprehensive approach to community development that recognizes the interrelationship of economic, physical, and social development. Individual empowerment may lead to challenging power structures within the family or immediate community, but it is only a precondition for larger processes of transformative development. This requires a transformation of existing structures, including physical and economic infrastructure, cultural paradigms and gender norms, and behavioral practices. As social and political institutions establish the context for individual and group behavior as well as access to and distribution of resources that individuals need to survive, people's actions and lives are largely shaped by the social structures in which they find themselves. These institutions are often characterized by exploitation, political exclusion, and unequal access to resources, leading to systemic

constraints and reinforcing the cycle of poverty. Without structural change, institutional patterns of decision-making and social relationships that deny identity, autonomy, or preconditions for human development will continue to limit individual agency and collective forms of empowerment. While this type of comprehensive development requires the powerful to relinquish and/or share some measure of power, I assume that reformulating institutional structures leads to alleviating societal power imbalances rather than simply reallocating power within a zero-sum framework.

## **Measuring Empowerment and Agency**

It is often assumed that power is generated through economic strength. However, this does not hold true in every social context as there are a number of other factors influencing power dynamics, such as gender relations, culture, class, or caste. Development must involve more than just increasing economic growth based on measurements of GDP. It must ultimately be concerned with improving the human condition, even if it results in inequitable development where some individuals benefit more than others. The empowerment approach to development aims to place people at the center of development with the stated end goal of ‘improving the human condition.’ However, methods for evaluating empowerment remain limited due to its multifaceted nature and the wide variety of views concerning what empowerment actually means. Even when defined, empowerment is often intangible and difficult to quantify on the ground. With this said, there are a number of methods available for measuring empowerment, which I will now discuss.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is heralded as a measurement to analyze the concept of human poverty, noting that this “does not focus on what people do or do not have, but on what they can or cannot do” (qtd. in Kabeer et. al 170). Therefore, the UNDP claims that the HDI is “not a measure of well-being. Nor is it a measure of happiness. Instead, it is a measure of empowerment” (qtd. in Kabeer et. al 170). International policy processes often equate empowerment with specific achievements, such as political participation, legal reform, and economic security. However, this focus on measuring achievements should be viewed as evaluating outcomes of empowerment rather than empowerment in and of itself. The two most commonly used methodologies



for measuring women's empowerment as a variable in international development include the World Bank model and the Women's Empowerment Framework adopted by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA).

The World Bank model consists of three domains (state, market, and society) and three levels (local, intermediate, and macro). It acknowledges that an individual can experience varying 'degrees of empowerment' (DOE) when domains and levels intersect, depending on the actor's agency as well as the opportunity structure (referring to formal and informal institutions) within which the actor operates. The model specifically identifies three degrees of empowerment for individuals and groups characterized by the existence of choice, use of choice, and achievement of choice. While the three domains evaluate the role of a person or group as a civic, economic, and social actor, the three levels in which people operate and experience empowerment include their neighborhood, the larger community, and the national level (World Bank Institute ix-x). One limitation to this framework is that evaluations focus on individual projects so it is difficult to conduct comparisons across countries or different contexts. Another challenge of this model is that it lacks consideration for qualitative issues, such as power. The model refers only to legal and economic factors, which makes it difficult to evaluate the process of changes that occur in empowerment (Chant 620).

One of the more interesting aspects of the World Bank framework that deserves further exploration is its emphasis on agency in the realization of empowerment. Agency is often evaluated by 'access' and 'control' indicators in relation to decision-making over resources (Kabeer 31). Such examples include measuring who keeps

household earnings or who makes decisions regarding household expenditures. The World Bank also measures agency based on an individual's 'endowment of assets,' which includes resources that allow people to be productive, to protect themselves, and to use social, political, and economic opportunities (World Bank Institute viii). This involves both human assets, such as skills and literacy, as well as psychological assets, such as self-confidence and the capacity to envision alternatives. However, human assets are easier to quantify and thus tend to be the focal point of measurements seeking to evaluate agency. The focus on control as an important measurement of the resource dimension of empowerment reflects the understanding that 'access' to resources can only translate into empowerment if women are enabled to act on or because of access to resources. In turn, resource-based measures that serve as indicators of women's empowerment make assumptions about the types of agency that women are able to exercise as a direct result of their 'access' to the resource being evaluated. While decision-making is usually regarded as an important measurement of agency, it is important to recognize that 'control' over various decisions differs across cultural contexts and may not indicate the same consequential significance for women's lives (Kabeer 33). As Kabeer acknowledges,

More commonly we find a hierarchy of decision-making responsibilities recognised by the family and community, which reserves certain key areas of decision-making for men in their capacity as household heads while assigning others to women in their capacity as mothers, wives, daughters and so on (31).

Consequently, familial and communal roles and responsibilities are often determined by pre-existing gender divisions that reveal much less about women's

agency over strategic life choices previously denied to them than about those previously allowed to them within prescribed roles.

The second predominant model for measuring women's empowerment and gender equality is the Women's Empowerment Framework, which was developed by Sara Longwe in 1988. UNICEF's 1994 'Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: A Policy Review' adopted this framework as a conceptual and operational approach to be used in mainstreaming women's empowerment. The Women's Empowerment Framework is also endorsed by CIDA as a tool for planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. It views women's development within five stages of equality with each stage considered an element of empowerment. The stages are as follows:

1. **Welfare:** This stage entails improvement in socioeconomic quantities, which only addresses the basic needs of women without recognizing the underlying structural causes of their disempowered status.
2. **Access:** This stage focuses on access to educational opportunities, land, and credit as essential components of women making 'meaningful progress.' This stage is complemented by the idea that empowerment is initiated when women recognize their lack of access to resources as a barrier to their growth and wellbeing and attempt to redress this inequality through action.
3. **Conscientization (Awareness-raising):** This stage entails acknowledgment that inherent structural and institutional discrimination is the root cause of gender inequalities and that structure transformation is a necessary precondition for women to take action to eliminate gender disparities. This stage also requires that women recognize the ways in which women themselves reinforce the systems that restrict their agency and personal growth.
4. **Participation:** This stage assumes that women will be empowered to gain representation only through collective organization, ultimately leading to increased empowerment and greater control. Collective mobilization is

imperative for women to begin having an equal role in decision-making with men.

5. Control: This final stage is reached only when women and men experience an equal balance of power. Women are able to make decisions over their lives and those of their children, play an active role in the development process, and are fully recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

While this model has much to offer analytically, as a measure of empowerment it has criticism for only addressing quantitative and objective indicators while lacking qualitative or subjective measurements (Chant 620). In addition to the difficulty posed by classifying specific activities within each stage, it is also challenging to determine if the stages are necessarily separate and consecutive or by what process an activity moves from one stage to the next. Another fundamental limitation of this model for measuring and evaluating empowerment is its focus on a micro-level interpretation of gender inequality, which tends to downplay the importance of actually measuring and evaluating institutional and structural change.

Now that I have analyzed the two predominant methods of measuring women's empowerment within the discourse of development, I will explore the Girl Hub Logframe that outlines the Girl Effect's objectives, intended impact, and the indicators used to measure progress toward these goals.

### **Girl Hub Logframe**

The Girl Hub's super goal is to enable five million adolescent girls to live in safety and make their own choices over their lives, which is measured by the following indicators:

1. Percentage of girls aged fifteen to nineteen that have ever been married.

2. Percentage of girls aged fifteen to nineteen that have ever given birth.
3. Percentage of girls aged fifteen to twenty-four that have completed secondary school.
4. Percentage of girls aged fifteen to nineteen that are economically active.
5. Percentage of girls aged fifteen to nineteen who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife.

In order to reach the Girl Hub’s super goal, the initiative aims to increase “girls’ voice, value and agency within society” (Girl Hub Logframe). The indicators established to evaluate achievement toward this goal include:

1. Proportion of girls who report confidence in being able to achieve their goals in life (self-belief and agency).
2. Proportion of girls reporting having supportive social networks, including the bottom 40% of girls.
3. Proportion of boys,’ parents’ and gatekeepers’ reporting positive attitudes towards gender equality in education, income generation and community civic participation.

Furthermore, the Girl Hub’s outcome objective is that “social communications, evidence and partnerships drive action for girls at scale” (Girl Hub Logframe). The indicators used to address this outcome objective are:

1. Increased number of girls attending girl groups outside the home and church/mosque at least once per month, (disaggregated by vulnerable groups, as per criteria), as a result of Girl Hub's influence and co-design support.
2. Number of policies (for example, in health, family planning, education, jobs, entitlement to assets and inheritance) that explicitly recognize girls.
3. Build recognition of adolescent girls into the post-2015 development framework.

Appendix C includes the Girl Hub logframe, which demonstrates the complete list of objectives and indicators for the activities funded by DFID’s central accountable

grant, the Nike Foundation, and other donors. The logframe is intended to represent the collaborative strategy of the Nike Foundation and DFID in meeting the goals and objectives previously outlined for all of their initiatives in the Girl Hub. While it contains baseline measurements for each indicator, the logframe does not display any information about the progress of these indicators to date. For this reason, my research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of two social communications platforms within the Girl Hub, including the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine in Rwanda and the *Yegna* radio show in Ethiopia. These two platforms are currently the primary sources of investment in the Girl Effect movement. For comparative purposes I investigate the Video Girls for Change (VGFC) communications platform, another initiative of the Girl Effect movement which remained separate from Girl Hub funding and activities. This program established its own set of goals and indicators, but I explore VGFC primarily as a smaller scale model for achieving social change through not only intensive engagement with adolescent girls, but also more sustained involvement with their immediate communities.

### **Video Girls for Change**

The VGFC communications platform operated in two very different cultures, Guatemala and Uganda. Video Girls for Change is a four-stage process of Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation (PV for M&E), which is an initiative involving the participation of InsightShare, Population Council Guatemala and BRAC Uganda to work with adolescent girls in marginalized and impoverished communities. This initiative received funding from the Nike Foundation as part of the Girl Effect movement to focus on training girls to produce participatory video for monitoring and

evaluation. While this project aimed to position girls in leadership roles as they shared their personal stories and perspectives, this year-long initiative (June 2011-May 2012) also intended to amplify the girls' voices through film screenings within their communities (InsightShare). In this way, the participatory video production process was designed to provide girls with a public platform in order to increase their "visibility" within their communities. Because of strategy changes within the Girl Effect movement, the VGFC project was unable to receive continued funding from the Nike Foundation. However, I do believe it is important to analyze this initiative as a potential empowerment-based model for achieving social change. Due to scalability constraints within my thesis project, I only examine the participatory video initiative in Guatemala. I chose to focus on Guatemala over Uganda in order to broaden the geographic and cultural diversity of my project, rather than concentrating solely on African projects. Additionally, my Spanish language proficiency allows me to better interpret Guatemalan sources over Ugandan sources.

## **Research Questions:**

The following research questions are intended to direct the framework for analyzing the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine, *Yegna* radio show, and Video Girls for Change participatory video project within the Girl Effect movement.

1. Are the objectives of the Nike Foundation and Girl Hub congruent with the needs of the intended beneficiaries?
2. As a reflection of the ‘power within’ dimension of empowerment, to what extent does the strategy of elevating girls’ voices in society have the potential to affect adolescent girls’ images of themselves, including their roles in their households and social networks, and in the economy?
3. As a reflection of the ‘power to’ dimension of empowerment, is there evidence from these platforms to suggest that attitudinal shifts toward gender norms initiate behavioral change?
4. As a reflection of the ‘power with’ dimension of empowerment, to what extent have the various social communications platforms influenced local perceptions and expectations of girls in terms of their value and role in society, including aspirations to form a strong collective of young women who can impact policy?



## Methods

The first section of my research focused on analyzing existing literature discussing the evaluation and measurement of concepts of agency and empowerment within a development context. Within development, I looked at economic and human indicators, including institutional rhetoric on development, as well as the role of gender in this arena. I then connected the Girl Effect's theory of change and notions of agency in development to each subsection of the literature review, establishing the Nike Foundations' stance in each of these debates. I collected this information through promotional tools, development studies on smart economics affiliated with the Nike Foundation and DFID, qualitative surveys conducted by the Nike Foundation, videos, and articles posted on the Girl Effect and Girl Hub websites. I also analyzed existing literature on criticisms of the Girl Effect theory of change as well as previous interviews conducted with Nike Foundation employees.

The second section of my research explored the three social communications platforms under study in four parts. First, I examined the cultural contexts of the three target countries, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Guatemala, including their socioeconomic conditions, social norms, and attitudes toward girls. Second, I collected and analyzed existing studies, scholarly articles, blog posts, videos, and newspaper articles on the Ni Nyampinga, Yegna, and Video Girls for Change programs. Third, I closely reviewed one complete issue of the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine (issue four), the English scripts of *Yegna* episodes 2-5, 8, 9, 11, and 13 of the radio show's second series, and a few of the participatory videos produced by girl participants of the Video Girls for Change project. Fourth, I interviewed individuals working for and with the Girl Hub and Video Girls for

Change as well as development workers in the field of the targeted countries, international students at the University of Oregon from Rwanda and Ethiopia, students at the Gashora Girls Academy in Rwanda, and an academic specializing in studies of development and female empowerment. The complete list of individuals that I interviewed includes:

**Angela Lagat:** Associate Brand Manager at Girl Hub Rwanda with responsibility for managing the development and execution of brand strategy activities that inform the creation of content for the established Ni Nyampinga products.

**Angela Rangira Uwase:** Seventeen year-old student at the Gashora Girls Academy in Rwanda whose concentrations include gender studies, ethics, journalism, women's studies, and international development.

**Danielle Luttrull:** Peace Corp volunteer who has participated in the Yegna Connections program sponsored by Girl Hub Ethiopia to form and lead a local girls club discussing topics related to issues presented by the *Yegna* radio drama show.

**Emmanuel Bagumira:** A University of Oregon student in the International Cultural Service Program originating from Kigali, Rwanda.

**Kassa Elliott:** Peace Corp volunteer who has participated in the Yegna Connections program sponsored by Girl Hub Ethiopia to form and lead a local girls club discussing topics related to issues presented by the *Yegna* radio drama show.

**Katie Carlson:** Gender and development specialist with a focus on Rwanda, including being the Founder and Executive Director at Paper Crown Institute, a Canadian not-for-profit social enterprise that works to support the personal and professional development of women and girls around the world.

**Keza Latifah Mashenge:** Seventeen year-old student at the Gashora Girls Academy in Rwanda and founder of the Dear Doctor Club, a group for students interested in the medical field who participate in workshops and organize community projects that build healthcare awareness.

**Lamia Karim:** Associate Professor in anthropology at the University of Oregon with expertise in studies of globalization, gender, development, social movements and religious nationalism.

**Nardos Berhanu Tadesse:** A University of Oregon student in the International Cultural Service Program originating from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**Paige Stoyer:** Portland-based photographer who helped train Rwandan girls in photography to produce the fourth issue of the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine.

**Rebecca Smith:** Senior Monitoring, Learning and Results Manager at Girl Hub Ethiopia with responsibility for designing, managing, and conducting qualitative and quantitative projects related to monitoring and evaluating strategies and outcomes of the Yegna platform as well as translating research into knowledge products.

**Samantha Stacks:** Peace Corp volunteer who conducts gender focused work in Ethiopia. She has participated in the Yegna Connections program sponsored by Girl Hub Ethiopia and Peace Corp led gender camps called Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), and leads a girls' club that meets regularly in her town of Debre Tabor.

**Soledad Muñiz:** Executive Director of Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation at InsightShare who helped to prepare the final report for the Video Girls for Change project.

In conducting these interviews, I pursued a semi-structured qualitative method involving ‘discovery’ interview questions in order to allow myself greater flexibility. Respondents were not selected systematically as I used a snowballing approach to establish a contact base. Interviews were conducted from January 28, 2015 to October 24, 2015. Each interview included closed questions, so that I could generate and quantify a more fixed set of responses in topics related to awareness and impact of the social communications platforms in their targeted societies. Yet each interview also included more open questions, which allowed people to express their thoughts in their own words regarding their interpretations of concepts of agency, empowerment, and development as well as existing social norms. Interview protocols also consisted of a small set of questions to be asked exactly as worded as well as opportunities to adapt and change some questions depending on the respondents’ answers. By treating the interviews more like a guided conversation, I was able to probe for a deeper understanding, ask for clarification, and allow the interviewee to steer the direction of the interview at times. I also recorded each of the interviews and took notes during the interview so that I could refer back to main points that the respondent emphasized. Once recorded, I transcribed each of the interviews, paraphrasing a few of the more repetitive and tangential responses. I then grouped similar topics within each transcription and coded the various transcriptions for common themes, patterns of agreement or disagreement, and outliers. Finally, I compared these findings with other primary sources, including blogs and participatory videos, as well as secondary sources, such as existing studies, scholarly articles and newspaper articles of the three social communications platforms and more broadly, from the Girl Effect movement.

## **Limitations**

One of the most significant constraints to my research was my limited direct access to girls and inability to speak with any adolescent boys in the identified countries. Due to financial and time constraints, I was unable to conduct fieldwork in any of the countries that I studied and encountered numerous technological difficulties when attempting to connect with people living in areas with little or unreliable electricity via email, phone, or Skype. I was also routinely denied access to speak with any Nike Foundation employees for reasons that were not clear to me. Despite these challenges, I was able to obtain direct quotations through girls' blogs as well as through newspaper articles that interviewed adolescent girls, community members, and employees of the Nike Foundation and the Girl Hub. In addition, I received direct feedback from two seventeen year-old girls at the Gashora Girls Academy in Rwanda (Angela Rangira Uwase and Keza Latifah Mashenge) as well as a few girls between the ages of fifteen and seventeen in Ethiopia through a set list of interview questions asked to the girls by an intermediary (Samantha Stacks). These girls wished to remain anonymous and therefore are not referenced by name. It is also important to acknowledge that I have taken direct quotes through secondary sources at face value despite potential biases, such as from *The New Times* Rwandan newspaper, which is known to be partial to the government and to typically convey optimistic events in Rwanda. While I was not able to directly obtain girl perspectives in Rwanda or Guatemala, I was able to triangulate different perspectives to find patterns that indicate more than anecdotal significance.

The second primary limitation to my research methodology involved my approach to conducting interviews. When conducting my own semi-structured interviews, I recognize that interviewer bias is unavoidable, as factors like status and cultural differences can affect the responses of the interviewee. Additionally, because of the more informal nature of my approach, the interviews were allowed to develop in various directions (while retaining thematic similarities), which complicated the process of comparing data across interviews. This means that conversations could have been influenced by my own personal agenda and that one must recognize the subjectivity inherent in my process of interpreting interviewees' responses to fit within the parameters of my research question. While the data collected from the respondents is not statistically robust, when compared with other primary and secondary sources it can be used to identify trends as a starting point for further research.

Another significant limitation to my investigation is that the Girl Hub social communications platforms are still in the early stages of developing brand affinity. This includes a lack of wide scale awareness of the Ni Nyampinga and Yegna brands as well as limited sustained exposure to these platforms. Ni Nyampinga has only been established in Rwanda for four years while Yegna has just completed its second year of operations in Ethiopia. Therefore, a longitudinal study is required to more effectively analyze the effects and potential implications of these social communications platforms related to the empowerment of girls and transformative development, more generally.

## Findings

I have now reviewed the concepts of gender, age, power, agency, and empowerment that are central components of the Girl Effect theory of change, as well as their intersections within the context of development. I explored the concepts of human and economic development within a gendered and generational focus on adolescent girls, and addressed the controversial implications behind the theory of ‘smart economics.’ I discussed criticisms of the Girl Effect movement as a model for positioning girls as good investment potential with the agenda of exploiting them as untapped resources for global capitalism. As part of this analysis, I addressed the role of agency within structural constraints as well as the measures used to assess the Girl Effect program. I will now analyze the three social communications platforms previously outlined that are intended to amplify girls’ voices and raise awareness about issues that impact adolescent girls in culturally specific contexts. While I recognize that these initiatives are useful and beneficial platforms, I argue that these efforts must be accompanied by safe and inclusive community spaces for girls to interact, learn, and share ideas with other community members in order to foster collective action. Furthermore, I postulate that transformative development, in the sense that positive change occurs for society at large, cannot be achieved by girls alone and must involve a more holistic approach that engages the wider community, including boys, parents, teachers, mentors, and neighbors. In addition, a more holistic approach must change current policies and infrastructure that actively disempower girls and women in societies.

## **Ni Nyampinga in Rwanda**

A Nyampinga Girl is... Unwali Uharanira Kujya Mbere. A Girl Who Ascends Mountains (Crystalline Randazzo).

*What challenges do Rwandan girls face?*

Rwandans today are still affected by the legacy of the 1994 genocide that left up to one million people dead. Foreign aid flowing in from the international community still constitute nearly half of the country's budget. One of the lasting consequences of the genocide is demographic in nature. With the death of so many adults, 61 percent of the Rwandan population is currently between the ages of zero and twenty-four. These young people are positioned to become the future voice of the country (CIA). While girls and women constitute over half of the population, they continue to face widespread gender inequality. As Founder & Executive Director at Paper Crown Institute,<sup>4</sup> Katie Carlson, explains, there is an underlying foundation of gender discrimination at every level of society. Even in Rwanda where women are nearly two-thirds of members of parliament, many girls still face worse health outcomes, educational opportunities, and employment prospects than their male peers. Despite having a female majority in the Parliament of Rwanda, the legislative body has largely been unable to enact many policy and structural changes needed to empower girls and women. The limitations of Parliament can be explained by the dominance of the executive branch in Rwanda as well as a severe lack of resources. There continues to be a disconnect between the government's rhetoric that has created policies to help leverage girls' and women's roles in society and the reality that they face at the local level. Gender itself is a

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<sup>4</sup> A non-profit organization in Rwanda that focuses on the personal and professional development of young women through participatory education and mentoring.



relatively new concept in Rwanda and many of the people living in rural villages do not even understand what gender means (Carlson).

A common theme that I found in my research of the reality that many Rwandan adolescent girls face is their serious and often debilitating lack of self-confidence that makes them feel less valuable than their male counterparts. According to a seventeen-year-old student at the Gashora Girls Academy, Angela Rangira Uwase, “Being able to assertively challenge someone in a debate is not considered ‘feminine’; that’s too much confidence for a girl” (Uwase). Being involved in debate at the Academy allows her to challenge what she has been raised to think, but according to Uwase, “almost every girl out there has been raised to believe in their own inadequacy in comparison to boys” (Uwase). All her life and those of girls around her have experienced constant stereotyping as they are compared to their brothers. In Rwandan culture, girls are taught to be timid, quiet, and submissive to their husbands and elders. They also tend to have extensive responsibilities in the domestic realm, such as obtaining water multiple times a day, caring for younger children, and doing various household chores which often prevent them from having enough time and energy to complete their homework or even attend school. Once girls reach puberty, their domestic responsibilities increase quickly. They are often expected to move from being a young girl to becoming a wife and soon after, a mother (Lagat). In many cases, marriage is treated like a social contract in which the woman becomes the property of her husband. This concept of bride price remains an important part of Rwandan culture, but is also commonly used to justify domestic violence. Particularly in the countryside, men often feel entitled to treat their wife as they wish, including beating her, reasoning that he bought her from her parents.

Likewise, women who are victims of domestic violence will often keep quiet for fear of becoming displaced, as she is likely unable to return to her father's house without her husband coming back to claim what he had paid to the family.

This issue of domestic violence is one of the most significant obstacles that girls face. Earlier this year, Rwandan President Paul Kagame reiterated that Gender Based Violence will not be tolerated and reaffirmed that ending violence against women and girls is a moral duty and legal obligation of the entire Rwandan society. Speaking at a gala dinner to celebrate International Women's Day, President Kagame stated, "Gender based violence will not be tolerated at all. Violence against women is not a Rwandan culture. We have a responsibility to apply the law to end it" (Republic of Rwanda). However, despite this commitment to promoting gender equality, the 2010 RDHS reveals that 56 percent of women believe that wife beating is justified for specified reasons, including burning the food, arguing with her husband, going out without telling her husband, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sexual intercourse with him (NISR et. al 229). In comparison, the proportion of men aged 15-49 who agree with at least one of the reasons justifying wife beating is lower than that observed among women at 25 percent (NISR et. al 230). This pattern of women's attitudes towards wife beating demonstrates the tendency of women to internalize their inferior status to men in the household and society and the tendency of men to have the prerogative of believing and choosing one way or another.

The other indicators that the Girl Hub uses to measure their super goal of reaching five million girls living in safety and making choices over their lives includes statistics regarding secondary school completion, and the percent of women aged 15-19

who have ever been married, given birth, and are economically active. In Rwanda, school attendance for girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen is as low as 43 percent in some parts of the country while nearly 50 percent of this age group reports that a lack of money prevents them from accessing health care (The Ni Nyampinga Generation). According to the 2010 RDHS, 16 percent of Rwandan women and 10 percent of Rwandan men have had no formal education, while only 2.9 percent of women and 2.6 percent of men aged 15-24 have completed secondary school (NISR 40). Educational attainment varies by residence with a higher proportion of men and women lacking any education in rural areas than in urban areas. In addition, 17 percent of Rwandan women are married by age eighteen compared to only three percent of men (NISR 55) and six percent of young women aged 15–19 have already begun childbearing (NISR 75). Polygamous marriages are not lawful in Rwanda, but the practice (while decreasing) is prevalent in more rural areas. Furthermore, the 2013 World’s Youth Data Sheet reports that 75 percent of females and 72 percent of males aged 15-24 participate in the labor force (PRB 6).

ESPN softball analyst Jessica Mendoza discusses her experience working with a group of young Ni Nyampinga journalists and learning about their conception of a girl’s role in society. One of her students, Lydia, was curious as to why Jessica Mendoza chose to cover sports rather than covering a more ‘natural’ topic for female journalists such as fashion. Mendoza explains that when she told the girls that she played sports and was very passionate about sports, “the group found this very interesting and new” (Mendoza). The nine girls that she worked with expressed interest in pursuing stories related to girls being pressured to have sex with their boss to keep their job, female

houseworkers being mistreated by their employers, and how foreign influences have impacted Rwandan history, culture, and society (Mendoza). These are just a few of the real issues that adolescent girls face, as reported by girls themselves. Uwase envisions a different future for girls in Rwanda, proclaiming:

I do not want the biggest fear of my classmates to be ending up without a husband and facing the shame of society because they are bold and independent. I want it to occur to that girl I met in the village that she can be a pilot, an engineer or a doctor, not just a teacher or a matron. I want to see my cousin sister become the future president of my country and I want to see all these girls dream big and grow to achieve those big dreams (Uwase).

*What social issues are important to Rwandans?*

Rwandan girls and other community members have been able to share their priorities in helping to define the new global development agenda for post-2015 through the My World global survey led by the United Nations. With around 60,000 respondents from Rwanda, 75 percent are under the age of thirty and 46 percent are female (MY Analytics Rwanda). The My World survey finds that Rwanda's top priorities are "A good education," "Better job opportunities," and "Better healthcare." These are closely followed by "Affordable and nutritious food," "Protection against crime and violence," and "Freedom from discrimination and persecution" (MY Analytics Rwanda). While there are no major differences observed between the top six priorities selected by both males and females in Rwanda, women prioritize "Equality between Men and Women" ninth whereas men prioritize this category tenth (MY Analytics Rwanda). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that overall Rwandans emphasize a higher priority on achieving equality between men and women as the ninth most important category while the rest of Africa averages a priority of fourteenth place.

The Rwandan government has promoted gender equality as an important part of Rwanda's commitment. In July of 2013, the Gender Monitoring Office and Girl Hub Rwanda co-hosted a three-day immersive workshop in Kigali that brought together Rwanda's girl-focused community, including government ministers, expert organization, NGOs, and adolescent girls, with the shared vision of bringing girls to the forefront of programming and policy. At the summit, the minister of gender and family promotion, Oda Gasinzigwa, pledged "continued government commitment in promoting a girl child through education and creating a conducive environment to enhance their full potential" (Girl Effect Team 2013). She went on to say, "If you want to break the glass ceiling that blocks you from getting to the top, you must show willingness to fight for it. Therefore, girls must be part and parcel of the solution" (Girl Effect Team 2013). In late April of 2015, President Kagame spoke on a panel titled, "What Would You Do to Make the World Better for Women and Girls? A Conversation and Call to Action," at the Milken Institute's Global Conference at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, California. Speaking on Rwanda's development, the President affirmed that the inclusion of all Rwandans is the only sensible option.

How can we talk about rebuilding the country – how can we talk about improving the standards of our people and leave behind 52 percent of our population? It just doesn't make sense. In the last 12 years, we've had economic growth of between 7 percent and 8 percent. This is because everybody has participated, including women (qtd. in Musoni).

President Kagame went on to acknowledge,

The country is for all of us. We share equally the benefits of what the country has to offer... Achieving gender parity is a joint project between men and women. It requires bold steps not incremental ones. We have seen progress and if Rwanda can achieve it everyone can (qtd. in Musoni).

There is evidence of recent government policies to alter the status quo and move toward greater gender equality. For instance, gender equality has become a visible component in Rwanda's land reforms, which grant women equal rights to own, use, and inherit land. In addition, a landmark 2008 Law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence has outlined penalties for rape and spousal harassment and rape. Rwandan authorities have also established "One-Stop Centers" to provide integrated services to victims of gender-based violence, including medical care, psychological support, and legal support (IRB). Established by the 2005 amended constitution, the Gender Monitoring Office is the government body responsible for monitoring the implementation of gender equality in all sectors of the country. However, implementation is still a work in progress and nongovernmental organizations are working to disseminate information about new laws and services to a largely illiterate population.

Rebuilding and reuniting this developing country has been a long and arduous process facilitated by strong restorative leadership and a collectivistically oriented society. This collectivist nature is demonstrated by the national community service day that takes place on the last Saturday of each month where the whole community is mobilized to clean the streets, dig trenches, or even make roads (Carlson). As Girl Hub Rwanda's Assistant Brand Manager Angela Lagat explains, "They are driven by if something will benefit the community, we will do it." This collectivist orientation indicates that empowering girls in Rwandan society must be seen as beneficial to the wider community. Therefore, it is important that a development agenda in Rwanda

emphasizes the ‘power with’ dimension of empowerment to connect directly with all segments of the population.

*What is Ni Nyampinga?*

The term Ni Nyampinga is derived from the traditional practice of *urubohero*, or weaving circle, where young girls would gather around their elders to learn about issues facing teenage girls like their bodies, relationships, and sex (Darrough). While the term has become more strongly associated with beauty in modern times, Girl Hub Rwanda seeks to bring back the term’s traditional meaning of sound decision-making, incorporating it with contemporary concepts. This program includes a quarterly magazine and live weekly half-hour radio show created by Rwandan teenage girls that cover topics of health, education, financial literacy, and individual stories. Some of the most recent issues have featured winning stories of girls who practice savings and entrepreneurship to develop themselves and their communities, an article detailing strategies for acing exams, a profile of a 109-year-old mentor, and informative pieces on reproductive health. In addition, the radio and print formats seek to engage girls through features such as phone-ins and advice columns, including a ‘to do’ section of the magazine that tries to inspire girls to speak with their family and friends on issues that are important to them. The purpose of this platform is to promote a positive identity among Rwandan girls by providing them with positive role models, stimulating conversations among girls themselves, and dispensing information with the goal of encouraging girls to obtain a secondary education. As Rwanda is ‘the land of 1,000 hills,’ *Ni Nyampinga* aims to share stories that are relevant to the reality that adolescent girls experience across Rwanda so that the magazine resonates with ‘every last girl on

the hill.’ Girl Hub Rwanda also works to promote a zero tolerance to violence and help communities understand the benefits that girls’ economic empowerment can have for the entire community. As the promotional video, “Why Ni Nyampinga is more than just a magazine & radio show?” explains, “It’s an identity. It’s a movement. Made for girls, by girls. Showing each other new ways to think about their futures whilst enjoying being teenagers” (Ni Nyampinga Video). This initiative seeks to elevate girls’ voices and self-esteem by rebranding teenage girls as valued citizens. The idea is to use girls as a mouthpiece to represent the challenges that many other Rwandan girls are facing. According to Girl Hub Rwanda’s Assistant Brand Manager Angela Lagat, “the magazine is just a tool to engage girls to find information they can actually use to allow them to feel empowered and enabled and like they can actually do something.”

#### *Who is behind Ni Nyampinga?*

As the magazine aims to incorporate a youthful, modern perspective, involving girls in the publication process has become an essential component of making Ni Nyampinga a platform ‘for girls, by girls.’ Ni Nyampinga Creative Editor Phoebe Mutetsi explains Girl Hub Rwanda’s strategy, “We were taking a cultural canvas and shaping it in a way that would maximize our message for girls all over the country.” She recalls, “Our aim was to build up a generation of girls who have information and knowledge – and are told how to use both” (qtd. in Darrough). Mutetsi also stresses the importance of involving the girls themselves in the conceptual design and tone of the magazine rather than following a more traditional approach of creating content without continuous communication with the audience. She states,



Capturing the actual tone of the girls was essential. We take what they say and make it more creative, more informative, and give it back to them. But we also go back to ask ‘Does this work for you? Is it helpful?’ For me as the editor, when I understood that, everything became easy (qtd. in Darrough).

By positioning girls as leaders, Girl Hub Rwanda assumes that girls who read the magazine are more likely to identify with them as their peers and therefore enhance the legitimacy of the brand. Girl Hub Creative Lead Jessica Thornley explains, “It needed to feel Rwandan: homegrown, with the voice of the girls throughout - like friends talking to friends” (Escobales). Mutetsi terms this approach the “cycle of inspiration,” which is demonstrated by a recent story covered by a fourteen-year-old girl photographer on teenage mothers. Mutetsi states,

She did an amazing story, and we asked ourselves ‘Who could do that better?’ She had first picked up a camera 3 months before. We were amazed at the quality of the photography and asked her how she had captured it so well. She responded, ‘This is what is happening among my peers – some are getting pregnant, many times forced to have sex by their boyfriends.’ She had true insight, something a non-peer would be unable to achieve. This opens up a whole new realm in journalism (qtd. in Darrough).

One of *Ni Nyampinga*’s primary goals moving forward is to have Rwandan girls be exclusively responsible for gathering all of the magazine’s content. *Ni Nyampinga* currently uses a Rwandan in-house designer and international designer to compile all of the individual elements of the magazine. In addition, the magazine often relies on professional photographers to provide the visual content even though girls do collect some of the images (Lagat). According to Lagat, one of Girl Hub Rwanda’s primary challenges is to find a way to bring this design process together so that girls are completely creating the magazine themselves at the same standard, including taking their own photos and designing it through photoshop and other digital design tools. Girl

journalists are compensated for their work on the magazine, but the length of their stint with *Ni Nyampinga* varies based on their age and individual situation.

*Ni Nyampinga* has also created professional avenues for some of the girl journalists. While Girl Hub Rwanda does not retrain the girls, they often do try to connect them with opportunities in other parts of the country (Lagat). One such example is former *Ni Nyampinga* journalist, Ritha Bumwe, who after writing for the magazine for a year now works as a news anchor on the commercial television station TV10 (Warren 59). Bumwe fondly remembers the first time she saw her own article in the magazine. “I kept the copy safe in my suitcase, and I’ll never lose it,” she says. “It showed me I have the capacity to *do something*” (qtd. in Warren). She goes on to explain how *Ni Nyampinga* has impacted her professional career as well as that of other girl journalists:

Before joining I was studying but jobless. *Ni Nyampinga* has made my career a reality. It’s changed a lot for [other contributors] too. They were jobless, but now they earn money that helps them be self-reliant. Most of them pay their own school fees. And most importantly, some were very shy, but now they can speak in public because they’re used to interviewing different people (qtd. in Warren 59).

#### *Ni Nyampinga Methodology & Content*

Girl Hub Rwanda initially trained thirty girls across three different types of locations, including urban, periurban, and rural, to be researchers. These girl researchers were able to reach approximately three hundred girls and sixty gatekeepers through conducting one-on-one interviews and group work with peers and gatekeepers (Social Development Direct 14). The key insights from this field work were that the government’s rhetoric about girls was not filtering down to the local level and that girls

were ‘growing up overnight’ and therefore could not experience their adolescence in a meaningful way. Girl Hub Rwanda then used these insights to design and shape the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine and radio show. There are now thirteen journalists who work across both magazine and radio platforms, all girls from a broad demographic between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four (Lagat). These girls come from very diverse backgrounds, including those that have grown up with two parents and others that are orphans from the genocide as well as some that attend school in rural areas while others live in Kigali (Warren). Girl Hub Rwanda initially started with girls aged fourteen to nineteen because they thought that the content would be stronger coming from this age group. However, they realized that managing younger girls was more challenging in terms of needing them to go out in the field to collect stories while they still had academic responsibilities to fulfill.

Girl Hub Rwanda now tries to recruit girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty who have just graduated from high school. Most recently, they graduated the class of girls that were the pioneers for producing the magazine and conducted a recruitment drive where they selected nine girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three to replace those *Ni Nyampinga* journalists that they just graduated (Lagat). These girls work with the assistant editor and editorial manager, who then work with the inside strategist, brand manager, and assistant manager to ensure that Girl Hub Rwanda is delivering content that coincides with the main country goals. Lagat explains that this process typically begins with translating ‘development talk’ on how to create change, how to change perceptions, and how to inspire and enable girls to make change in their own lives into ‘brand speak’ that they have as marketers. This ‘brand speak’

then goes to the rest of the team who share it with the *Ni Nyampinga* girl journalists as a brief to pan out what types of stories they want to brainstorm. At this point, they typically begin a four-day workshop to brainstorm behaviors that they want to target in girls and angles that they may take in order to strike a chord with the target population (Lagat). In addition, Girl Hub Rwanda selected six young Rwandan women from their team of brand ambassadors to be trained by 2CV (a qualitative research agency) to become qualitative researchers. By having young female researchers closer in age and cultural background to the adolescent girls and communities from which they hope to collect data, they are more able to gain deeper insights and access to members of communities who are harder to reach and are not normally represented in research. The purpose of this project is to better ensure that the magazine's

*Ni Nyampinga* is produced in the local Kinyarwanda language as a large-format magazine that is designed to sit over two people's laps so they can read it together. Appendix D provides an example of the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine's content, which includes an extract from the fourth issue focused on the importance of mentors as a source of inspiration and knowledge for adolescent girls. This publication was unique in that it was the first time that Girl Hub Rwanda used full-time girl journalists to start writing the magazine (Lagat). According to Lagat the magazine has completely evolved since the fourth issue. Girl Hub Rwanda is currently working to produce its twelfth issue of *Ni Nyampinga* and now focuses on using much fewer words, averaging around two hundred words per article. One of the challenges that Girl Hub Rwanda has encountered is the high illiteracy rates among Rwandan men and women. Chance Mukamusoni, the girl ambassador of Nyagatare district, reports that some girls and

young women are unable to read the magazine because they did not attend school (Umutesi). According to the 2010 RDHS, the proportion of illiterate men and women has decreased from previous generations, dropping from 46 percent in the 45-49 age group to 15 percent in the 15-24 age group for women, and 28 percent and 18 percent, respectively for men (NISR 40). Due to this challenge, Girl Hub Rwanda tries to make sure that girls can still understand the gist of the magazine stories by incorporating more visual elements. Lagat recognizes that *Ni Nyampinga* is “very design driven but we want to make sure that the content is relevant.”

*Ni Nyampinga* has six pillars that direct its content, including safety, economic empowerment, sexual reproduction, health, education, and marriage. Girl Hub Rwanda has partnered with the Rwandan government to align their pillars with goals and strategies that the government is currently pursuing. For example, the Government of Rwanda adopted Vision 2020 in 2000 with the main objective of transforming Rwanda from a traditionally agrarian society into a middle-income country with a knowledge-based economy by the year 2020 (EDPRS 2). The expected outcome of this vision is a united Rwanda that achieves the goals of producing good governance, an efficient state, skilled human capital, a vibrant private sector, improved physical infrastructure, and modern agriculture and livestock that allows the country to be competitive both regionally and globally (EDPRS 2). Girl Hub Rwanda is attempting to tap into government policies to grow the private sector and build skilled human capital through improved education, health, and information technology by translating these strategies into content for the *Ni Nyampinga* brand, such as stories within their economic empowerment pillar. For instance, one of the first issues of the magazine featured girls

doing jobs traditionally held by men, such as an electrician, plumber, and motorcycle taxi driver. Fourteen-year-old Yvette was inspired by this particular publication to become the only musician in the hilltop village of Muramba in Rwanda's Northern Province (Escobales). Yvette recalls reading this issue, stating, "It was like a veil was being lifted, because I always thought girls were left behind" (qtd. in Escobales). While initially hesitant about this undertaking, Yvette's mother, Genevieve, is now supportive of her daughter's ambitions as she explains, "I was worried about how the community would think about her as a traditional singer, because I've never seen girls playing that instrument" (qtd. in Escobales). "I thought people would think I'm crazy to do boys' work," Yvette says. "To see others who do it makes me think I can do it too. Talking to my friends about the magazine, we discovered we all felt the same" (Escobales).

Twenty-one-year-old Diane Uwamahoro is a dentist at Remera Rukoma Hospital in Kamonyi district who was also inspired by the magazine to pursue her passion for science. "I read stories in the magazine in 2011 about how science is a field that girls should not shy away from and this gave me the confidence to take on such a challenge," Uwamahoro states. "It inspired me to study sciences and I'm now a dentist. The real life experiences portrayed in the magazine are inspiring" (qtd. in Umutesi). Uwamahoro recognizes the need to build capacity for Rwandan girls, particularly in developing their self-confidence. She explains that Ni Nyampinga is trying to help break various cultural barriers that cause girls to "grow up scared of achieving certain dreams or goals because they are brought up thinking that some fields are a man's domain thus limiting themselves and crushing the aspirations they had" (qtd. in Umutesi). Uwamahoro adds, "When you interact with most teenage girls, they will tell

you how they want to be like Esther Mbabazi, Rwanda's first female pilot, because of the story they read in the magazine about her journey to such a great achievement” (qtd. in Umutesi).

The Rwandan government has also addressed growing concerns regarding the increase in human trafficking cases in Rwanda as well as the need for authorities and civilians to become more vigilant about this issue. At the opening of the 2014-2015 Judicial Year on September 7th, President Kagame spoke on the importance of leveraging the justice system to continue combatting cross border crimes, including human trafficking. In the following week, the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Stella Ford Mugabo urged residents on a visit to Kayonza to help young people avoid falling prey to unscrupulous people who arrive in their community and falsely promise great job opportunities abroad (Mugwaneza). According to *Ni Nyampinga* Brand Representative and Radio Journalist Benigne Mugwaneza, the overwhelming majority of human trafficking victims are young innocent girls who are lured out of the country with promises of ‘juicy jobs,’ typically turned into sex slaves and made to do ‘other humiliating chores.’ Mugwaneza writes in her own article, “As a young woman, I am particularly concerned about similar stories I read every day in which girls end up in compromising situations because they feel they have no choice.” She was one of a group of colleagues that distributed the tenth issue of *Ni Nyampinga* in September 2014, which showcases how women are pillars in their communities and explores the different opportunities that Rwandan women and girls have gained in the last 20 years since the genocide. Mugwaneza states, “We talked to women who recalled that life in Rwanda 20 years ago was not full of the opportunities that young girls have today, such as the

encouragement to go to school and to have careers outside of the home.” A couple of the magazine’s stories included a feature on young women who wake up early each day to clean the streets of Kigali and another that focused on mothers in Rubavu district who joined together to start a day care for children so that other mothers could go to work without worrying about their children (Mugwaneza). Professional photographer, Crystaline Randazzo helped to provide the visual content for issues ten, eleven, and twelve as well as to train young Rwandan girl reporters who have a passion for photography and storytelling. In her photography blog, Crystaline describes traveling all over the country for the tenth issue of *Ni Nyampinga*. She met women feeding the sick in hospitals, observed nurses, teachers, and politicians who were adolescents at the time of the genocide who have given back so much to their communities, encountered mothers who came together to build a better school and brighter future for their children, and spoke with girls who built homes for vulnerable people (Randazzo). Reflecting on her experience working to produce this issue, Mugwaneza writes,

My fellow girls, life doesn’t always offer us what we need to reach our goals and we are not all offered the same opportunities. But we live in a country and a time full of possibilities. Everyone has a dream but not everyone can realize it in a same way.

You may not have the chance to go to school and you therefore may think that the easy way to make money is by selling your body. If you think really hard, though, you will find that you have another choice.

We all have somewhere we want to reach and most of the time our goals in life are inspired by the people we encounter in our everyday life.

All the stories we heard while producing this issue showed us that there are many women across the country that started with nothing and have managed to create successful lives for themselves. We see these stories as a sign that we too can do it.

So girls, let’s take advantage of the country we live in and strive to create better lives for ourselves.



In pursuit of the Girl Hub’s goal to increase girls’ voice and value within society, Girl Hub Rwanda produced a community issue titled *Ndashyigikiwe*, meaning ‘I have support,’ in the sixth publication of *Ni Nyampinga*. Recalling the Girl Hub Logframe’s indicator of the proportion of girls reporting having supportive social networks in order to measure their impact objective of increasing girls’ voice, value, and agency, this community issue sought to involve the wider Rwandan society. According to baseline data from Quantitative Attitudinal Studies conducted in 2012 by the Girl Hub, 23 percent of girls (disaggregated into the bottom 40 percent of girls) reported having supportive networks (Girl Hub Logframe). The sixth issue of the magazine involved the collaboration of ninety girl reporters in the regions of Gakenke, Musanze, Nyagatare, Kayonza, Ngoma, Nyaruguru, Nyarungenge, Muhanga, and Nyanza. According to *Ni Nyampinga* Editor, Phoebe Mutetsi: “What makes it different and what makes it special is we’re now giving up the control and letting the girls really put their stamp on it. Giving them pages of the magazine and telling them, this is yours, put what you want” (qtd. in Brookes). In addition, Girl Hub Rwanda issued a statement on this particular publication focused on building a community around girls, saying, “The making of Issue 6 was something special, a unique community collaboration between *Ni Nyampinga*’s girl journalists and ambassadors and their girl audience, working together to co-create a truly inspirational edition” (qtd. in Brookes).

### *Audience & Reach*

Launched in November of 2011, *Ni Nyampinga* is now the most circulated magazine in the country with 90,000 copies published for each issue. With the lack of distribution channels or an existing publishing industry, the initiative has involved the

creation of a national distribution network of thirty girl ambassadors to reach each of Rwanda's districts. Every ambassador is responsible for ensuring that each issue of the magazine goes directly to adolescent girls within her district, with the aim of fostering a sense of community and providing knowledge that will help girls become strong decision makers and leaders in their communities (Warren). Another part of the ambassador role is "to help identify different girl groups that we can give creative license to" (qtd. in Brookes). Rather than dropping off a bundle of magazines at a school where there is no guarantee that they will be read, the team of girl ambassadors holds town hall-style gatherings with girls for each issue that is published (Escobales). A nineteen-year-old ambassador for the Gakenke district, Sandrine Uwisanze, reports that the conversation is different each time: "I ask them about what they thought of the previous issue, about their thoughts and their lives. We've become closer and now they open up to me and tell me what they would like to see in the next issue" (qtd. in Escobales).

The radio show is broadcast on seven stations across the country through a peer-to-peer style of communication. It includes dialogue between the two main presenters, Cecile and Beni, alongside music from some of Rwanda's most popular artists and pre-recorded interviews with girls who share their life stories (Warren). The *Ni Nyampinga* radio show airs every Tuesday and Thursday on Radio 10 and Radio Rwanda at 2:00 pm as well as on Isango Star Radio every Sunday at 1:00 pm (Umutesi). Beatrice Niyigwiza is one of the pioneer presenters of the *Ni Nyampinga* radio show that first aired in November of 2011. Niyigwiza explains, "On the show, we provide teenage girls with information about issues that affect them and we provide possible solutions based

on testimonies of experienced people. We hold talk shows with teenage girls around the country so that they can share their experiences and learn from them” (qtd. in Umutesi). Niyigwiza is now in her fourth year pursuing a bachelors degree in economics at Kigali Independent University and has opened a small shop that sells bags and ladies accessories. Her interest in business was sparked by interacting with other young women who started their own small businesses. “We have interviewed young women who have ventured into business and are doing well yet they started with insufficient capital,” Niyigwiza reveals (qtd. in Umutesi). Beyond economic empowerment, she asserts that:

The *Ni Nyampinga* radio show has helped in promoting dialogue amongst teenage girls and their parents. There are issues that parents and teenage girls are scared of discussing but when we talk about them on the show, a platform through which the teenagers can ask questions and attribute the source of information is created and this is helpful especially with issues of behavioral change (qtd. in Umutesi).

Since the program’s initiation, 30 percent of Rwandan girls have listened to *Ni Nyampinga* radio and 33 percent have read the magazine out of a total population of around one million girls (girleffect.org). According to the 2012 Annual Review by DFID, the *Ni Nyampinga* radio program had a regular radio audience reach of 400,000 with the total current population of Rwanda being over 12 million (Social Development Direct 11). While coverage of *Ni Nyampinga* has been in every major media outlet in Rwanda, it is important to recognize that there are only seven districts with *Ni Nyampinga* radio playout stations (Social Development Direct 10). Appendix E contains a map of the *Ni Nyampinga* radio playout station locations in Rwanda along with the population density of each district (Girl Impact Map). Based on 2012 statistics, the *Ni Nyampinga* radio show regularly reaches an audience that only amounts to three

percent of the total population. According to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact report findings in March 2012, “Girls that we met who had seen the magazine told us that their first impressions were positive” (ICAI 13). The Girl Effect website also claims that 70.6% of readers/listeners say that *Ni Nyampinga* gives girls direction on life issues, and 71.2% say that it teaches girls to view life positively (girleffect.org). Despite this initial optimism, it is important to acknowledge that the magazine is of little use for those it does not reach, those who are unable to read, or those who do not have safe places to engage with peers to discuss issues. These first two concerns may be mitigated to some extent by the radio program, but access issues still exist.

In terms of marketing, Girl Hub Rwanda relies primarily on word of mouth to build brand recognition. They have also launched a few *Ni Nyampinga* road shows to travel across Rwanda with the purpose of creating awareness for the magazine and inspiring girls to fulfill their potential. One such road show featured the eighth issue of the magazine titled, “Nige Niyubake (The Best I Can Be), and encouraged girls through the spirit of *Ni Iyanjye Nawe* (It’s mine and yours). This is one way that Girl Hub Rwanda has tried to address the challenges posed by locals’ unfamiliarity with magazines and newspapers. ESPN’s Jessica Mendoza reports in her blog that while training the *Ni Nyampinga* journalists to find stories and conduct interviews in order to write their first article, the students were often denied interviews or met resistance when they wanted to photograph locals. A common question they received was, “How will this help me?” (Mendoza). Furthermore, western words like “advertising” and “marketing” have been nearly impossible to translate. Mendoza encouraged the girls to

keep trying, echoing Girl Hub Rwanda's belief that "the more stories we tell, the more the public will get to know Ni Nyampinga and see its value" (Mendoza).

### *Potential for Empowerment & Limitations*

There is preliminary evidence to show that Ni Nyampinga may have the potential to effect the 'power within' dimension of empowerment for adolescent girls in Rwanda. In a recent quantitative survey of the Ni Nyampinga brand, 70 percent of magazine readers reported feelings of increased self-confidence and self-worth (Social Development Direct). However, more study is needed to learn whether this type of change is translating into wider social and economic benefits, aside from anecdotal accounts such as the individual success stories previously discussed. Those who are most likely to embody the 'power within' dimension are girl journalists, ambassadors, and researchers, and to a lesser extent the girls and women who are given the opportunity to share their stories. For instance, photographer Paige Stoyer, who trained seven *Ni Nyampinga* journalists, for three months feels that the girls in her photography class experienced individual empowerment as "it introduced to them a whole possible path for them to take" (Stoyer). One of her students, Christine, admitted, "I didn't know girls could be photographers." For Stoyer, the most rewarding part of the entire training process culminated in the girls' final projects in which they each produced a mini photo essay that was displayed as part of a gallery wall. In her assessment of the effectiveness of her photography class, Stoyer explained that it was just satisfying to see the girls' pride in their accomplishments. "The looks on their faces, they were so proud. Their parents were so proud," Stoyer reflects. I believe that these feelings of pride and

demonstrations of girls' abilities reflect the early stages of the empowerment process with girls beginning to recognize their potential.

Positive feedback has been particularly strong from girl beneficiaries of Girl Hub in terms of the private benefits they have received from mentoring and training in magazine and radio journalism as well as in research methods. For instance, 24-year old ambassador of Nyagatare district, Chance Mukamusoni, largely credits the trainings she received as an ambassador for her current role as a researcher for Ni Nyampinga products.<sup>5</sup> She proclaims, “Besides being economically empowered as a researcher, I'm respected in my community because of the different roles I played in influencing other girls in my community as a Ni Nyampinga ambassador” (qtd. in Umutesi). In addition to attaining ‘beneficial’ connections in the professional world through distributing the magazine, Mukamusoni reports: “We discovered there were some girls and young women in the villages who could not read, but we made it our initiative to mentor and help them read, and I can say that it has been a successful journey” (qtd. in Umutesi). Another Ni Nyampinga ambassador from the Muhanga district, Claudine Uwamahoro, asserted, “I'm happy that I was given the chance to express myself fully without fear. I was involved in public discussions with our district leaders and it's wonderful that Rwandan girls are being recognized, our future is bright” (qtd. in Umutesi). In addition to inspiring other girls, Uwamahoro adds that her position as an ambassador helped to boost her self-confidence. She says,

*Ni Nyampinga* magazine and the radio shows opened our minds to achieve our dreams and goals. Inspiring stories published in the magazine about other girls and young women who have made it in life

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<sup>5</sup> The term ‘products’ refers to different forms of media, including magazine, radio, and mobile platforms.

have been of help not to only me as an ambassador but to the girls in my district that I have been interacting with for the last two years (qtd. in Umutesi).

In this sense, Ni Nyampinga has also demonstrated its potential to impact the ‘power to’ dimension of empowerment by providing a limited group of girls with extensive training and mentoring to help them develop their own skills and capabilities and act as leaders in their local communities. Another aspect of this dimension is the educational component of the magazine. For example, Francis Rutabingwa, the head of Nyagatare Youth Center, says that he has noticed positive change among the girls in Nyagatare, which he largely attributes to *Ni Nyampinga* magazine and radio show. As the youth center addresses behavioral change and youth reproductive health issues, Rutabingwa reveals that “*Ni Nyampinga* magazine and radio show has helped girls, and even the boys, learn how to respect their bodies and become responsible for their health. Today, it's so hard for a teenage girl to be deceived, for instance that if they have sex for the first time they will not get pregnant” (qtd. in Umutesi). By providing girls with relevant educational information on factors that influence their own health and wellbeing, they are more likely to feel comfortable and confident in navigating and making decisions over their moving world. Furthermore, the magazine teaches basic life skills so that girls can learn that they have rights and can negotiate and speak up to defend those rights.

To a limited extent, the magazine and radio show have inspired collective organization through the formation of girls’ clubs and peer support systems within their schools. According to Girl Hub Rwanda’s editorial product manager Afrika Mukaneto, some girls have formed clubs in schools as a platform to voice their issues. Mukaneto

explains, “We are helping girls create a social network” (qtd. in Warren). While Lagat echoes this sentiment claiming that girls are forming their own clubs where they engage with the *Ni Nyampinga* material “to create their own social capital among themselves,” she reveals that these clubs are not facilitated by Girl Hub Rwanda. Rather, Girl Hub Rwanda seeks to create content that can be used in the clubs to inspire discussion among teens. Journalist Roxanne Escobales writes about one such group of girls that meets every Wednesday after school in Kigali to design and make jewelry and clothes while sharing their skills and encouraging one another to develop in new ways (Escobales). Eighteen-year-old Odile formed the club after reading about a girl who made bags from upcycled<sup>6</sup> materials in one of the first issues of *Ni Nyampinga*. “Before *Ni Nyampinga*, there was no news for girls my age,” she says. “I realize that girls are changing because of the information in the magazine and on the radio. We now feel capable and not afraid to do anything” (qtd. in Escobales). At fifteen years of age, Stella is the youngest member of the club, reporting that she has been inspired by seeing other girls achieving their goals in art, sport, and design. “It’s taught us girls to have confidence. I want to be a leader, a prime minister. I will be happy when someone calls me Mrs. President,” she says (qtd. in Escobales). Seventeen-year-old Daphne models the club’s creations and explains how her mother has tried to influence her decisions. “I have to follow my dreams,” she says. “My mother tells me to wait, wait, wait before having children because I have a lot of things to do like finish my studies and start my career. I don’t think anyone told her the same” (qtd. in Escobales). The girl clubs are an

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<sup>6</sup> Upcycling is the process of converting waste or useless products into new materials or better quality products.



important form of collective action that show potential to foster the ‘power with’ dimension of empowerment. Despite these promising examples of girls organizing themselves, it is important to recognize that these girl clubs are typically spontaneously generated and are usually monitored so their effects are largely unknown.

Additionally, there is concern that many girls are only connecting with the magazine on a surface level. Gashora Girls Academy student Keza Latifah Mashenge explains that the magazine first appealed to her friends because of its attractive design, pictures, and fashion tips, but that “no one seemed to comment about the stories and experiences shared by the girls in the magazine.” According to Carlson, Mashenge, and Uwase, *Ni Nyampinga* seems to be interesting to girls but largely does not have a real impact on everyday lives. Aside from the *Ni Nyampinga* journalists whose skills are being promoted and the girls who are highlighted in the magazine’s articles, they both remain skeptical about the magazine’s capacity to effect change. For Carlson, “It’s like trying to fight a forest fire with a single bucket of water.” She continues on to say, “Even the girl with the strongest voice and the strongest agency is still battling a whole host of issues that she doesn’t have control over” (Carlson). One of these ‘issues,’ or constraints, is the traditional mindset that many mothers share in Rwanda. With familial pressure to conform to gender norms and social expectations, it can be even more difficult for girls to challenge gender stereotypes that actively constrain their lives. In addition, Uwase argues that for many of the girls who just receive the magazine, the stories themselves lack context and can be “almost equally alienating as if they were coming from people in a different cultural and socioeconomic context.” As Uwase explains, “It’s another talented fashion designer or lucky entrepreneur.” According to

Uwase, the magazine lacks information that teaches and guides girls on where they can start from and mostly shows them only what has become possible for others. More than just a platform to tell their stories, Uwase explains that girls need the tools with which to make those stories become reality within their own lives. This means access to essential public and private services like skills training, microfinance, or time-saving tools and practices that could serve as potential income opportunities for girls.

Stoyer also expresses concern regarding the effectiveness of Girl Hub Rwanda's approach to using adolescent girls as journalists. At the time that she worked with the students, Stoyer was an employee of the Global Press Institute (GPI) who briefly partnered with Girl Hub Rwanda to provide extensive journalism training to the girls working to produce the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine. According to Stoyer, the GPI model of training women to become professional journalists is geared toward teaching them to use journalism over the long-term as a development tool to educate, employ, and empower women. In contrast, Girl Hub Rwanda's more short-term approach to training and working with only adolescent girls proved to be "more of a diversion and distraction" to GPI's extensive journalism training process (Stoyer). Due to the small age window that defines adolescence as well as the logistical challenges posed by younger girls attending school full time, Girl Hub Rwanda's approach leads to a higher turnover rate. This is particularly troubling considering the involved and time-consuming training process that is required for each girl to become a full-time journalist for the magazine (Stoyer). In addition, the lack of print material in Rwanda, including magazines and newspapers, limits the girls' journalistic opportunities after they are no longer able to work for *Ni Nyampinga*. The career prospects are similar for girl

ambassador graduates. The thirty Ni Nyampinga ambassadors that graduated last year do not hold particularly marketable skills in Rwandan society.

There is also a substantial lack of evidence of the magazine's impact on girls' male counterparts. Lagat claims that boys are some of the biggest fans of Ni Nyampinga as they often cover their exercise books with cutouts from the magazine and do 'engage' the content and share it with girls. However, this level of interaction does not substantiate attitudinal or behavioral change among boys. At the same time, Lagat recognizes that "for change to happen a girl cannot exist in isolation." While Girl Hub Rwanda is primarily concerned with maintaining their girl focus and do not want girls to feel like Ni Nyampinga is for everyone, they do try to reflect content that shows positive stories around male figures. For instance, the magazine does show instances in which a brother, dad, or male guardian of the family supports the idea that a girl has value and tries to ensure that she stays in school and finds different components of economic empowerment (Lagat). The purpose of telling stories from the point of view of a man is to show what other members of the community can do to help shape this idea of girl value. Girl Hub Rwanda claims that there is evidence of other community members, including mothers, fathers, guardians, clinicians, and nurses who are using the magazine's content to engage teenage girls. In addition, Lagat says that some mothers make girls and even boys read the magazine as well as using it as a teaching tool for respect (Lagat). While trying to strengthen the perception of girls as valued members of the community is one of Girl Hub's indicators of success, I believe it is important to draw attention to a popular Rwandan social proverb, which states, "The President views men the same way he views plastic bags and thatched huts" (Carlson).

Within the context of President Kagame's recent ban on plastic bags as well as his entrepreneurial initiatives to leverage the country economically, this proverb is meant to demonstrate how men are negatively perceiving messages around gender equality and feeling excluded by girl focused development programs. In order to achieve transformative development, men and boys must also feel included in this programming and understand that they share its socioeconomic benefits. While there is something impactful in allowing girls and women to share their stories with other people, it is equally important to reach out to the other half of the population to include boys and men in empowerment processes. Otherwise, girls themselves, as they exercise their perceived new status, may actually encounter increased domestic violence.

### **Yegna in Ethiopia**

If every Ethiopian girl finished school it would add almost \$4 billion to the country's economy (girleffect.org).

*What challenges do Ethiopian girls face?*

This quote illustrates the concept of 'smart economics' that is at the core of the Girl Effect theory of change. Of the 74 million people that populate Ethiopia there are currently about 27 million people living in poverty, with women comprising a majority of those living in absolute poverty. Gender differentials persist at all levels given women's lack of access and control over resources as well as many discriminatory traditional customs. In fact, Ethiopia is ranked 129th out of 136 countries on the gender-related development index (GDI) (UNFPA & Population Council 1). By focusing on the connection between gender equality and smart economics, Girl Hub Ethiopia seeks to identify and address through programming those obstacles for girls which prevent them

from contributing to and benefiting from economic growth in Ethiopia. Girl Hub therefore prioritizes country-specific social issues that prevent higher return investments in adolescent girls.

At the very foundation of Ethiopian society is a collectivist culture. According to the Geert Hofstede rankings, Ethiopia has a score of 20 in the category of individualism, which means the preference to focus on one's own gain rather than on others is very low and that loyalty is a very important part of building strong relationships (The Hofstede Center). In a collectivist society like Ethiopia, girlhood is strongly tied to a sense of familial duty and domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, offense often leads to shame and loss of face. For Ethiopian adolescent girls growing up in a shame-based culture, this means learning and internalizing the social norm that a good girl is an obedient, resilient, and quiet girl. During her time in Ethiopia, Peace Corp volunteer Danielle Luttrull observed a common sight in classrooms, meeting rooms, and language centers in both big and small towns:

A teenage girl is called on to present in front of the class. She stares at her feet, she stares at the wall, she makes no eye contact with anyone. She giggles, she closes her eyes. Her right hand alternates from covering her eyes to covering her mouth, while she stands in paralyzing fear and silence for up to three minutes. The air has been sucked out of the room, and you, back there in your seat, are nearly trembling *for* her (Luttrull).

Another Peace Corp volunteer stationed in the Western Amhara region of Debre Tabor, Samantha Stacks, reports that girls are treated like second class citizens. Even education policy and institutions perpetuate these gender inequalities. One of Girl Hub's indicators for measuring their super goal is secondary school completion. The majority of Ethiopians have little or no education with 52 percent of females and 38 percent of males having never attended school (CSA 26). However, the proportion of females with

no education has declined significantly from 98 percent among those aged sixty-five or older to just 17 percent among females aged 10-14 (CSA 26). According to University of Oregon ICSP (International Cultural Student Program) student, Nardos Berhanu Tedesse who was born and raised in Ethiopia, even the most privileged girls and women encounter institutionalized gender-based discrimination in the education system and workforce. The government decides individual career placements based on transcripts and national exam scores. If a student fails the national exams in grades eight, ten or twelve, they do not get to continue their education. Girls are discouraged from studying what are traditionally viewed as 'male' subjects of science, engineering, technology or math, which translate into the highest paying jobs. Instead, women are typically directed into the humanities where they will be better suited for jobs with lower productivity and pay. Tedesse says that this process often results in funneling individuals into areas of employment in which they are disinterested, which effectively restricts innovation. Stacks echoes this sentiment, explaining that it is the system and not the individual that has control over their professional future. She asserts,

Everyone has the goal of being a doctor, not because they want to help people, or enjoy learning about medicine, but simply because it's the best thing you can be. This also means students don't have much control in reaching their goals (Stacks).

Even in the workforce women are expected to be subservient to men. According to Tedesse, even if a woman is well educated and has her degree, most supervisors are male and call on women to perform sexual favors in order to be hired or promoted.

A 2010 Ethiopia Young Adult Survey of nearly 5,000 girls in seven regions found that 50 percent of girls who were out of school were not attending because their family disapproved of them going to school (UNFPA et. al 23). Parents often choose to

keep girls indoors to protect them from the threat of violence and to preserve their value for marriage. Additionally, the lack of access to menstrual pads is a significant obstacle to girls attending school. Another primary reason for the lack of school attendance among adolescent girls is due to household burdens. In fact, 16 percent of girls reported that they were unable to attend school due to too many domestic duties, averaging 28 hours of household chores per week (UNFPA et. al 23). One of the most time consuming chores is collecting water, the burden of which typically falls on girls and women. In the 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS), only 13 percent of households reported having water on their premises while more than half of all households (53 percent) claimed to travel thirty minutes or more to fetch their drinking water (CSA 13). The societal expectation of girls to be primarily responsible for household work takes away from their ability to do schoolwork as they are often tired, distracted, and do not have time to study. Kassa Elliott, a Peace Corp volunteer in Ethiopia states,

The girl is expected to help out with washing clothes, preparing coffee and helping to watch the baby, in addition to completing her school homework while the boys are frequently absent from the household because they are out in the neighborhood playing (Elliott).

Such high levels of domestic work tend to keep girls in the home and leave them isolated. In fact, 21 percent of girls aged 12-24 say they do not have a single friend (UNFPA et. al 15). Having friends is indicative of the extent of one's social network and engagement, whereas having no friends can reflect social isolation and limited participation. With the majority of the population residing in rural areas (84 percent), this can lead to higher levels of isolation. Additionally, a large proportion of young people have reported losing one or both parents (20 percent), with 25 percent of girls

aged 12-17 living with neither parent (UNFPA et. al i). Given the large number of young girls living away from their parents, an area of concern is their tendency to have weaker social networks than boys, including fewer places to stay overnight if needed as well as fewer spaces where they can safely meet and share experiences.

Another common theme affecting Ethiopian girls that Girl Hub seeks to monitor is the incidence of early marriage and child birth. In Ethiopia marriage signals the point in a woman's life when childbearing becomes socially acceptable. In fact, according to Tedesse, "a woman's virginity is considered her best asset" (Tedesse). Despite it being illegal to marry before the age of 18, the median age of marriage among women aged 25-49 is 16.5 years (CSA 63). The proportion of girls who are married by the age of fifteen is declining, however, from 39 percent among women currently aged 45-49 to 8 percent among girls currently aged 15-19 (CSA 63). Early marriages tend to be arranged and are most common in the regions of Amhara and Tigray (UNFPA et. al ii). One-third of married girls aged 12-24 reported that they did not want to get married at the time they did, and 22 percent did not want their marital sexual initiation at the time it happened (UNFPA et. al 49). Various sources indicate that the tradition of abducting girls for marriage persists in Ethiopia as well. Early marriage is typically followed by early childbirth. While only 9 percent of women aged 25-49 have given birth by the age of fifteen, 38 percent have given birth by age eighteen and 58 percent of women have become mothers by age twenty (CSA 78). Data shows that early marriage severely limits girls' engagement in education and their employment prospects, with 29 percent of girls indicating marriage as their primary reason for dropping out of school (UNFPA et. al 23). Despite its illegality, female genital mutilation (FGM) is a tradition that



continues to be practiced in Ethiopia. In the Ethiopia Young Adult Survey, 58 percent of girls in the sample were circumcised with 59 percent of all circumcised girls opposing their own circumcision (UNFPA et. al ii).

One of the most significant issues facing Ethiopian girls that Girl Hub uses as an indicator is domestic violence, which is common in both urban and rural families. Ethiopian society has historically encouraged violence against women, exemplified by an Ethiopian proverb which translates to, ‘Women and donkeys love being battered’ (Fite 53). The 2011 EDHS reveals that 68 percent of women believe that wife beating is justified for at least one of the specified reasons, including burning the food, arguing with her husband, going out without telling her husband, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sexual intercourse with him (CSA 256). In comparison, the proportion of men aged 15-49 who agree with at least one of the reasons justifying wife beating is lower than that observed among women at 45 percent (CSA 256). Wife beating is a form of physical violence that is a fundamental violation of women’s rights, rooted in the male-dominated culture of discrimination against women. It has the effect of degrading women and reflecting women’s low status in society, legitimizing the appropriation of women’s objectification. Furthermore, this form of violence tends to lower a woman’s self-esteem and her image in society, leading to her disempowerment. In particular, abuse victims are often left helpless and humiliated while perpetrators of domestic abuse crimes often go unpunished. In addition, while 15 percent of sexually experienced young women reported in the Ethiopia Young Adult Survey that they had experienced forced sex, a considerable number blamed themselves for the occurrence and did not tell anyone about it (UNFPA et. al iii). It is also important to note that

young men described being victims of considerable violence from parents and teachers in the Ethiopia Young Adult Survey. With this in mind, one might draw a connection between this early experience of violence and how it might translate into violence against women later in life.

Born and raised in Ethiopia, Rediet Yibekal is a young activist in her early twenties who holds a different understanding of womanhood from the social norm and refuses to tolerate any kind of mistreatment that disempowers her. In her blog titled, “Violence Against Women in Ethiopia: The Case of #JusticeForHanna,” Yibekal writes,

I try my best not to be very emotional about the mistreatment that women face, but I live it everyday. Because of the dress I choose to express myself, I get stopped and harassed. Because of my principle to empower and educate myself before I am married, I get judged and reminded constantly that I should settle down; meanwhile, the same expectation and judgment doesn't apply to men of the same age. Because of my strong opinions against patriarchy, I am labeled as a man-hater or westerner-wannabe. My Ethiopian identity is put on trial due to my understanding of womanhood and my take on feminism that is seen as an influence of Western culture. This is the reality for most, if not all, young women in Ethiopia—whether they are from the capital Addis Ababa or live in other parts of the country (Yikebal).

*What social issues are important to Ethiopians?*

Ethiopian girls and other community members have been able to share their priorities in helping to define the new global development agenda for post-2015 through the My World global survey. Only about 2,000 of the 20,000 respondents from Ethiopia were women, with nearly 75 percent of the female respondents between the ages of sixteen and thirty (MY Analytics Ethiopia). The My World survey finds that Ethiopian women and the overall population have the same top priorities: “A good education,” “Better healthcare,” and “Better job opportunities.” For women, these are closely

followed by “An honest and responsive government,” “Equality between men and women,” and “Access to clean water and sanitation” (MY Analytics Ethiopia).

Economically, Ethiopia is pursuing a public sector-led development strategy to promote growth through high public investment, particularly in infrastructure. From an agency standpoint, it is worthwhile to note that the proportion of seats occupied by women in parliament is significantly higher than expected for Ethiopia’s income level. However, at the higher decision-making (ministerial) level, there are much fewer women than expected.

The Ethiopian autocratic single party government has recognized child marriage and FGM as ‘harmful traditional practices’ and made a commitment in July 2014 to eradicate these two practices in Ethiopia by 2025 (Unicef Media Centre). The Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen announced that Ethiopia would achieve its goal through a strategic, four-pronged approach:

1. To establish a clear benchmark and measure levels of child marriage and FGM through incorporating relevant indicators in the national plan and national data collection mechanisms (including the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey),
2. By enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and the National Network to end FGM through engagement with key expertise from different actors,
3. By implementing strong, accountable mechanisms for effective law enforcement,
4. And, through increasing financial resources by 10 percent from the existing budget to eliminate child marriage and FGM (Unicef Media Center).

Another area in which the Ethiopian government has promoted greater gender equality is through reducing domestic violence. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal

Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) was the first legal framework in Ethiopia to directly address the right of women to be protected from domestic violence. Article 35 is entirely devoted to enlisting the specific rights and freedoms of women (Fite 53). The Criminal Code has been more recently revised in conformity with the FDRE constitution, seeking to address human rights issues, particularly those of women and children. For instance, the Ethiopian Criminal Code of 2004 criminalizes most forms of violence against women and girls including rape (articles 620-628), trafficking women (article 597), prostitution of another for gain (article 634), physical violence within marriage or in an irregular union (article 564), abduction, (articles 587-590), FGM (articles 565-566), and early marriage (article 649) (Fite 55). Of course enforcing these laws is an entirely different issue. In recent years, government institutions and development partners have been using various media outlets to educate the community about these laws, especially those that prevent gender-based violence. The 2011 EDHS collected information on community knowledge of the existing law that prevents a husband from beating his wife, finding that only half of currently married women (49 percent) know there is a law against a husband beating his wife (CSA 265).

### *What is Yegna?*

Adolescent girls aged 10-19 constitute nearly a fourth of the Ethiopian population and nearly 7 million live on less than \$2 each day (DFID Girl Hub Ethiopia 1) In order to support young girls and women like Rediet Yibekal, who encounter gender-based discrimination every day, Girl Hub created the Ethiopian radio drama and talk show called Yegna in April of 2013. This strategy stems from the important role that drama holds in Ethiopian culture. The five main characters that compose the Yegna

drama and girl band are nicknamed the “Ethiopian Spice Girls.” Each member of the band has a different stage persona with individual story arcs that seek to address the diversity of issues that adolescent girls encounter in Ethiopia. Melat (26-year-old Teref Kassahun Tsegaye) is known as the “city-girl princess” who dreams of becoming a singer, but is set back by her wealthy family who has no time for her ambitions. Mimi (26-year-old Lemlem Hailemicheal) is the “tough, swaggering streetwise girl” who left behind the husband she was forced to marry when she was thirteen. Lemlem (22-year-old Rahel Getu) is the patient, “steady maternal type” who is the only girl in her family and is left with the responsibility of caring for her ill mother. Emuye (22-year-old Zebiba Girma) is the “vivacious music-lover” whose father is a physically abusive alcoholic. Sara (27-year-old Eyerusalem Kelemework) is the “quiet, studious one” who comes from a well-educated, overprotective family but tends to be more introverted, lonely, and shy (Brown). The drama show also follows the life experiences of two lead male characters and incorporates other types of actors like teachers and parents in an attempt to address a more diverse audience. As Ethiopia’s first youth brand, Yegna is designed to reframe girls as valued and essential members of Ethiopian society in order to help them feel more connected to their own community and to each other.

### *Who is behind Yegna?*

Every year Girl Hub Ethiopia leads the writers’ insights process, which is done in partnership with a team of script writers and a creative management agency that delivers all the different components of *Yegna*. The script writers consistently revisit the behavior change goals established by Girl Hub and design the story arcs for the various characters according to how they want the five girl figures to carry out different

behavior change themes. In order to align the show's topics with social issues that are relevant to adolescent girls' lives, Girl Hub, the Yegna management agency, and the script writing team participate in several weeks of workshops that involve feedback from experts and qualitative field work with girls and other community members. The purpose of this process is to understand the real experiences of average Ethiopian girls and the challenges they face in their daily lives. It is particularly important for Girl Hub to draw from local experts and field work since the Yegna team consists of middle to upper class Ethiopians who do not truly understand the situations of rural adolescent girls—the most vulnerable and primary target of the Yegna initiative. While drawing on the input of adolescent girls, Yegna does not have the same organic feel as Ni Nyampinga in the sense that the content is not truly created by girls. Girls are not driving the research nor are they deciding the content. Only five girls serve as the mouthpieces for Yegna's messaging.

#### *Yegna Methodology & Content*

*Yegna* performs a biweekly radio drama and talk show broadcasting to about twenty million people in Addis Ababa and the Amhara region. The first half hour is the radio drama followed by a half hour talk show called *Yegna Se'at*, which regularly includes everyday Ethiopian people and well known inspirational figures as guest hosts. These hosts explore the issues raised in *Yegna* through features, interviews, and audience interaction.<sup>7</sup> These two radio formats are meant to be complementary as the talk show often provides real life examples of topics covered in the drama show. For

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that men are more likely to listen to the radio talk show than the drama show (Smith). *Yegna Se'at* is also broadcast in English, which limits listenership and audience participation.

example, discussions will focus around Mimi fleeing her forced marriage or Emuye experiencing violence in her home. As Mimi's character develops from living on the street to aspiring to start her own business, the other Yegna girls look up to her confidence and strength. Behavioral change theory is woven into the arc of *Yegna's* narrative to not only reflect real situations that Ethiopian girls face, but also to illustrate how girls can come together and support one another through their own individual challenges to reach their personal goals. Appendix F provides an example of the behavior change goal in the first radio series that discusses domestic violence and encourages girls to speak out against violence committed against them in the home. In order to create social change in an environment where attitudes and behaviors toward girls are deeply engrained, the Yegna platform is designed to challenge the way people think about girls.

In addition to the radio drama and talk show, the Yegna branded media platform includes music that aims to champion girls and create a national conversation about their challenges and potential to overcome these barriers. The Yegna music is an upbeat combination of traditional Ethiopian music with pop and rock music that is intended to appeal to Ethiopia's youth. As Rebecca Smith, Senior Monitoring Learning and Results Manager at Girl Hub Ethiopia, explains "We are finding that the music is the most well-known aspect of the Yegna platform" as it tends to appeal to a broader audience (Smith). The group's first song and music video release called "Abet" (which is the Amharic response when being summoned) featured Haile Roots and has been viewed more than 600,000 times online. It also won the best single award at Leza Radio's Listeners' Choice Awards last year. One of Mimi's lyrics in this song directly

challenges the social norm that characterizes a good girl as a quiet girl when she sings, “We have stood up! We have decided! See us—here—we have come!” Appendix G contains the English translation of the complete song, which aims to inspire girls to feel confident.

### *Audience & Reach*

In addition to the two radio shows, Girl Hub Ethiopia holds community events like musical performances to share the Yegna experience with community members and particularly to encourage girl participation. Girl Hub has also worked with Amhara Women’s Association to increase its reach to thousands of new listening groups as well as partnering with the Ministry of Education to broadcast *Yegna* in schools during break periods. However, it has been much more difficult to reach the rural Amhara region than Girl Hub Ethiopia had anticipated with such a large proportion of the population living in rural areas separated by expansive distances and a challenging geography of mountains extending across the whole north of the country (Smith). According to the 2011 EDHS which assessed people’s exposure to the media, including how often respondents read a newspaper, watch television, or listen to the radio, 80 percent of women aged 15-49 accesses none of the three media at least once a week (CSA 42). Among girls aged 15-19 and 20-24 this figure is around 62 percent (CSA 42).

While exposure to mass media is low in Ethiopia, the most common form of media is listening to the radio. About one-quarter of girls aged 15-19 and 20-24 and 38 percent of men listen to the radio at least once a week (CSA 42). In one of Girl Hub Ethiopia’s most recent listenership surveys, only 6 percent of rural respondents reported having electricity in their home (Smith). Even though most people in rural areas have



battery operated radio sets, they often do not have enough money to afford batteries. Consequently, the radio show only reaches a quarter of the population. Of the nine regional states that compose Ethiopia, three of the poorest areas, Afar, Somali, and Gambela remain largely beyond direct reach of the *Yegna* radio show. This means that Girl Hub's communications approach is not reaching many of the most isolated girls who have little access to media in their own local language, such as girls in Afar where the main source of information is word of mouth (Crawford 43). From Girl Hub Ethiopia's perspective, their biggest challenge is achieving listenership at scale and sustained exposure, including finding creative ways to reach people, particularly in rural areas, such as building on existing infrastructure and networks like the Amhara Women's Association and the Ministry of Education to reinforce listenership (Smith). Most recently, Girl Hub began broadcasting a movie on national television at the end of April 2015 with an independent story line but based on the same core values as the *Yegna* radio show. The film is also being screened at roadshows in various communities.

Cultural and linguistic diversity in Ethiopia can also present challenges. Situated in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is at the crossroads between Africa and the Middle East and has traditionally been a melting pot of diverse customs and cultures. Today, the country embraces a complex variety of nationalities and linguistic groups, including over eighty different languages. While *Yegna* is broadcast in one of the three main languages, Amharic, it does not address those who exclusively speak the other two primary languages, Tigrinya and Oromigna, nor those who speak minority languages, particularly common in rural areas. The talk show that directly follows the radio drama

is conducted in English, a language only taught in private schools and all secondary schools, which a small proportion of girls are able to attend. In addition to its limited reach, Yegna has been heavily criticized for its large price tag, so far receiving £3.8 million from the DFID and £800,000 from the Nike Foundation (Brown). British conservatives and TaxPayers' Alliance have spoken out against the initiative, claiming that the aid money could have been used more effectively. "Putting on the radio show is nonsense," claims one media commentator who does not wish to be named. "This kind of empowering women has to be aimed at the people in the countryside – it is those girls who are abandoned. Those girls who are in the city with access to the show have got their education and know about their rights" (qtd. in Brown). In response to this criticism, Lemlem Hailemicheal who plays Mimi has stated, "It is definitely worth the cost – it is an amazing issue. It means a lot to Ethiopia and we are using the money effectively. It is a big change. We are like the Spice Girls except our music is not just for entertaining – it is educational" (qtd. in Brown).

#### *Potential for Empowerment & Limitations*

One of the primary differences between the Ni Nyampinga and Yegna platforms in terms of their strategic approach to initiating social change is the incorporation of girls' clubs through a program called "Yegna Connections." This "club-in-a-box" idea is intended to serve as a tool-kit of resources complete with Yegna promotional merchandise, a collection of recorded episodes, and an educational curriculum to accompany the series. Girl Hub Ethiopia has been partnering with the Peace Corp in the past year to implement these girls clubs in order to "build up positive brand equity" (Smith). Danielle Luttrull was a Peace Corp volunteer stationed in Tigray who

participated in the Yegna Connections program and held weekly girls' club meetings each Saturday for fourteen girls (grades 6-10) in her community to come listen to the drama in Amharic and then discuss what they had learned from the radio show in Tigrigna and English. It was also an opportunity for the girls to connect through creative games and arts and crafts projects that included themes of personhood, respect, defining their own character, and positive aspects they loved about being a girl. Luttrull ensured that it was not just a group of friends who knew each other well, but rather a discussion environment which included girls with a variety of personalities and from different social backgrounds.

An example of the club's discussion format is as follows. Luttrull's girls were initially presented with the domestic violence situation that occurs in the *Yegna* show in which Emuye's father would beat her mother and sisters. In a typical episode, the listener is provided with a reflection question associated with the problem as well as different ways to address the issue. For example, Emuye plans to keep quiet about the abuse but one of her more confident friends, Mimi, wants to report it. After listening to the episode together, Luttrull would then pose the same reflection question to the girls in her group so they could discuss what they would do in a similar situation. In the beginning, the majority of the girls in her group chose not to say anything because of the tradition of domestic violence is viewed as a private, family matter in Ethiopian culture and fathers are rarely viewed as being wrong. "That's just one example of *Yegna* really unearthing the subject and showing it in its raw form," Luttrull states, "not really telling which is good and which is bad but letting the discussion follow so that you can talk about it and see what the girls think kind of organically." It is through this format

that Yegna Connections girls' clubs attempt to foster a sense of agency among the girls themselves. For every discussion question posed regarding an episode's principle topic, the girls would compare the different choices they could make in similar situations. While not explicitly taught the concept of agency, the educational curriculum of the girl clubs revolves around the idea that girls are directors of their own lives. Luttrull recalled one session in which the girls discussed being objectified by men and "treated like pieces of meat," but the lesson to be learned was that "no one was in charge of themselves other than themselves, that they couldn't be owned like an animal, but they owned themselves" (Luttrull).

By the end of the four months of the girls' weekly meetings Luttrull noted significant attitudinal and behavioral changes among a few of the girls in her group, particularly related to the 'power within' and 'power to' dimensions of empowerment. First, several of the girls gradually demonstrated a greater comfort level within discussions and became more outspoken. Luttrull reports, "The ones who were midway between quiet and speaking up were much more free with giving their opinions and wanting to talk more and not really afraid of what the other girls thought." She goes on to explain that this growth in confidence also translated into greater participation in the classroom and led some of her girls to feel more comfortable talking to new friends. These are signs that some of her girls may be finding a sense of power within themselves. The second area of change that Luttrull observed was in some of the girls' responses to discussion questions, such as those about domestic violence. A few of the girls started challenging the common belief that domestic violence is just a fact of life that girls have to deal with by being strong women. For instance, the oldest girl in the

group, Netsanet, had just failed her exams and could no longer attend school when she first joined the girls' club. While initially embarrassed and shamed by her failure in school, Netsanet slowly gained confidence in the club. When presented with a hypothetical situation in which a father had physically abused the mother and threatened to hurt the family more if the girl spoke up, Netsanet responded that "she should absolutely tell the police and it was not safer to not tell the police" (Luttrull). By challenging discriminatory and restrictive stereotypes in Ethiopian society, the girls were able to internalize their right to act on the world around them. At least on an attitudinal level some of these girls embodied aspects of the 'power to' dimension of empowerment through knowledge and capacity building.

The third transformation that Luttrull noticed was the way in which some of the girls became drawn to a specific *Yegna* girl and started to recognize the positive attributes that they shared. Luttrull explains, "We would talk about which one is your favorite and it was neat to watch them attach to these girls." For example, one of her students, Makda, was a "super brainy, really smart kid" who became drawn to Sara's intelligent, reserved character and began recognizing some of their relatable positive attributes like their shared thirst for knowledge (Luttrull). In this way, the *Yegna* Connections program has helped foster a common understanding of what it means to be an Ethiopian girl and teach girls that they have more options in life than the traditional mindset they are often taught at home. Peace Corp volunteer, Samantha Stacks, also explains that her *Yegna* Connections club in the Western Amhara region of Debre Tabor is an important safe space for girls to have conversations with one another. One of the girls in her group explains, "This is important because in our country we don't

talk about things. In the future, if we have these problems we will not be afraid to talk about them” (Stacks). Because girls are largely excluded from the public sphere, Yegna Connections offers girls a unique opportunity to safely learn from one another and develop new friendships. Consequently, I would argue that this girl club model does foster the ‘power with’ dimension of empowerment. By bringing girls together in this supportive manner they are able to realize the importance of individuality while also feeling a sense of belonging. One of the girls in Stacks’ group comments, “For all my life, I thought being a girl was terrible, and I wished every day that I was a boy. Now I know how important it is to be me” (Stacks). While only a pilot program, Yegna Connections has the potential to harness the power within girls by growing their self-confidence in collaboration *with* other girls.

According to another Peace Corp volunteer who participated in the Yegna Connections program, Kassa Elliott, the radio drama has helped to leverage certain issues, such as early marriage, inappropriate faculty behavior in schools, saving money, and domestic violence as topics of conversation at the household level. For example, one of the girls in Stacks’ group explains that Yegna has inspired her brother to ask her questions about how she feels and how he can help her (Stacks). The program also encourages girls to set goals and make plans to achieve them. The Peace Corp volunteers explain that having a family is an important goal for most of the girls in their groups. Empowerment plays an important role in this process. Girls with greater confidence and knowledge about their own health and reproductive rights are more equipped to make well informed decisions about when and how they would like to start a family, including understanding their options around family planning. The Yegna

Connections clubs offer a good starting point for this knowledge building and planning process. In addition to Yegna Connections, Girl Hub Ethiopia has recruited five hundred girl ambassadors from universities across the region to organize listening parties at which young people are able to come together to listen to the radio show and discuss what they have heard. The purpose of these listening parties is to reinforce behavior change messages, particularly in rural areas (girleffect.org).

At the most fundamental level, Elliott recognized that the twelve girls in her program seemed to enjoy having a time and place to talk and experience something different from their everyday activities. These empowerment programs often focus on the economic potential of girls, but it is important to remember that they also exist to improve human lives. There is something innately beneficial about increasing girls' confidence in their own voice and abilities. Some of the girls have even continued to work with Elliott as facilitators in different programs, such as teaching their peers in schools. However, Elliott reported that from her own observations, the Yegna platform has not affected any significant changes in girls' lives at the societal level. This seemed to be a common trend in my research. Girl Hub Ethiopia has also confirmed this finding through two population based household surveys and focused group discussions that have been conducted in the Addis Ababa and Amhara regions. They sampled boys and girls aged 10-19 as well as adult men and woman to collect data around general media consumption habits in terms of awareness of Yegna products, patterns of recommending them to others, and self-reported attitudinal and behavioral change (Smith). In terms of their behavioral change goals, the surveys uncovered that

Men and boys seemed to hit a wall when it came to progressing from knowledge and attitudes. They stayed at that level, and never or were much less likely to show that linearity of a pathway to change that would take them to actual changes in practice or behavior, whereas girls and women were much more responsive around the specific theme of gender-based violence. Men and boys were less receptive to actual messaging in terms of changing behavior (Smith).

While several sources have applauded the positive reception of *Yegna* by girls in various communities of Addis Ababa and Amhara, evidence does not yet support the theory that these individual attitudinal changes are translating into larger behavioral changes. Since I posit that empowerment requires a belief that one has a voice and that their voice has value and is acknowledged by their wider community, my current research suggests that girls are largely not experiencing a sense of empowerment within Ethiopian society. Those who have been involved in the *Yegna* Connections program, however, do have a greater potential of experiencing different forms of empowerment.

Now entering the fifth series of the radio drama and talk show that will be primarily focused on themes of child marriage and migration, it remains to be seen if the *Yegna* communications platform can effect material change for young girls and women in Ethiopia. As of October 2014, Girl Hub Ethiopia claimed to have over one million listeners and that early data showed that 63 percent of listeners reported that the program had made them think differently about issues that affect girls' lives like child marriage and gender-based violence (Salama & Court). However, Smith admits that there is no concrete evidence to demonstrate that local perceptions of girls have changed. Girl Hub Ethiopia also prides itself on positioning boys as champions for girls by creating content that appeals to them, including positive male role models intended to illustrate healthy relationships between girls and boys. For example, Manti is the lead



male character in the radio show who also happens to be the Yegna group's biggest fan. In addition, the talk show features male guests who are positioned as role models for other boys and men, such as Adissu Demissie, a former shoe shine boy who became a successful choreographer. While these male figureheads are an important starting point to connect the Yegna brand with boys and men, they lack the organized listening parties and conversation groups organized for girls. With this lack of discussion among the male population about social issues which impact gender equality, it is not surprising that Yegna has not effected significant behavioral change with boys and men. However, it is important to remember that Girl Hub Ethiopia is still in the early stages of developing the Yegna platform as they just reached the two-year mark since the brand was established. Therefore, it is too early for any kind of conclusive data to suggest the potential of the communications platform to initiate significant changes in girls' lives.

### **Video Girls for Change in Guatemala**

*What challenges do indigenous Guatemalan girls face?*

In a country of over fifteen million, poverty disproportionately affects Guatemala's indigenous Mayans. They account for more than half of the population, but less than a quarter of the country's total income and consumption (CoEd). I will be focusing on the plight of indigenous Guatemalans as the VGFC programming specifically targets Mayan communities. Government policies have historically excluded Mayans from sharing in the benefits of the nation's economic growth. Indigenous Guatemalans remain targets of racism, injustice, and unequal access to land, labor, and education. Many Mayan communities across the Western and Central

Highlands are still struggling to recover from the brutal 36-year civil war that killed 200,000 and displaced hundreds of thousands of people (CoEd). Indigenous Guatemalans experience high illiteracy rates (up to 40 percent) and a lack of formal schooling. In fact, Mayan women typically complete fewer than two years of schooling (Hallman et. al). For those who are able to remain in school, the quality of the education system is frequently abysmal. Teachers largely lack formal training and adequate resources like textbooks, technology, and other materials to facilitate learning, which leads to an inability to develop proper study skills as well as a lack of motivation and poor academic performance among students. In addition to a lack of public services to support education, indigenous Guatemalans have limited access to adequate healthcare. Nearly half of all children are chronically malnourished with malnutrition being twice as frequent among indigenous children (Mayan Families).

The primary reasons for indigenous girls' lack of enrollment in school include insufficient funds and household responsibilities. In addition, almost 40 percent of Mayan women are married by the time they reach eighteen with parental expectations of their daughters' future roles to revolve around being a wife and mother (Hallman et. al). Parents are often reluctant to invest in their daughters' education beyond the age of puberty because these roles do not require advanced education. Mayan girls who do not attend school are most often primarily engaged in domestic activities. This frequently leads to social isolation, as church groups are the only form of interaction that many of these girls have outside of their homes. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges that indigenous Guatemalan girls face is gender-based violence. Girls and women are

particularly vulnerable because of the prevailing culture of machismo<sup>8</sup> in Guatemala. According to UN representative María Machicado Terán, 80 percent of men believe that women need permission to leave the house with 70 percent of women surveyed agreeing with this statement (Guinan). During the 36-year conflict, women were used as a weapon of war and were victims of countless atrocities, including rape, torture, and mutilation. As a consequence of Guatemala's deeply rooted patriarchal society and institutionalized acceptance of brutality against women, girls and women today are commonly victims of domestic violence. While Mayan girls represent a large subgroup nationally (624,000), they are the most disadvantaged members of society on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, and economic status that reinforce intergenerational cycles of social marginalization.

*What social issues are important to Guatemalans?*

Guatemalan girls and other community members have been able to share their priorities in helping to define the new global development agenda for post-2015 through the My World global survey. About half of the nearly 4,000 respondents from Guatemala were women, with fifty percent of the female respondents between the ages of sixteen and thirty (MY Analytics Guatemala). The My World survey finds that Guatemalan women and the overall population have the same top priorities: "A good education," "Better job opportunities," and "Protection against crime and violence." For women, these are closely followed by "Better healthcare," "An honest and responsive government," and "Affordable and nutritious food" (MY Analytics Guatemala). Of the

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<sup>8</sup> Machismo refers to a strong sense of masculine pride. Masculine characteristics are culturally valued to the point of denigrating characteristics associated with the feminine.

top sixteen social issues that matter most to Guatemalan women, they ranked “Equality between men and women” as the seventh priority. As poverty is so widespread in Guatemala, particularly in rural areas, it is important to understand how Guatemalans themselves perceive “poverty.” In a 2001 study of the perception of poverty in Guatemalan villages, most people equated poverty with a lack of basic necessities including food and clothing as well as a lack of access to land or housing (The World Bank 2004). The majority of the villagers surveyed also linked poverty to inadequate public services, especially education. It is no surprise, then, that Guatemalans have prioritized a good education as the most important social issue in their country.

*What is Video Girls for Change and participatory video?*

The VGFC program was established to teach adolescent girls to use participatory video to assess and evaluate existing projects as well as to position girls in leadership roles by “documenting the challenges and obstacles they face within their lives; sharing their experiences and perspectives; and communicating the solutions they devise and successes they achieve” (InsightShare 6). In Guatemala, VGFC worked with a program called Abriendo Oportunidades (Creating Opportunities) sponsored by Population Council Guatemala. Abriendo Oportunidades aims to support Guatemala’s most disadvantaged population, including rural, indigenous girls ages 8-17 in order to provide them with a safe space to meet and gain life skills. One of the most prevalent issues impacting Guatemalan girls that the participatory video project hoped to highlight was gender based violence. It also aimed to address widespread feelings of low self-worth felt by many adolescent girls, reinforced by bullying from their male peers. According to Alejandra Colom, Director of Population Council, “The process of

filming each other and reflecting on what they have said allows them to open up and talk about things that they were afraid to talk about before they were on camera” (qtd. in del Valle). Over a period of seven months, Guatemalan girl trainees listened to 150 girls and collected, analyzed, and shared twenty-two stories of change (VGFC Final Video Report).

Participatory video production uses an easy and accessible medium that brings community members together to discuss issues and concerns and to foster creativity. This method uses experiential learning to conduct interviews and share information with peers in videotaped storytelling processes that can then be analyzed and shared with different stakeholders. VGFC followed a standard consent procedure that required the parents’ general consent for their daughter’s participation in the group activities and filming, as well as individual consent for the girls’ testimonies (InsightShare 44). In the process of supporting girls’ voices through participatory video, girls are able to recreate concepts in their own words so they are better able to understand them. In addition to engaging girls and providing them with a platform to leverage their voices within their community through film screenings, the PV process intended to address differences between the assets that Abriendo Oportunidades was offering to girls and assets that girls actually needed. For instance, girls most frequently emphasized the importance of learning new skills, highlighting life skills, reproductive and sexual health education, and vocational trainings as the key to creating change in their lives. They also requested more access to counselling and training to overcome gender-based violence (InsightShare 52). In response to what he thought was the most important takeaway from the PV experience, Population Council Guatemala M&E Coordinator, Angel de

Valle, explained that it was the information they collected “to close that gap between what we thought girls needed through the asset building program we built for them and what they really ask, their real needs” (Webinar). At the same time he expressed the importance of including young leaders as active participants in the research process. He stated, “Creo que es importante incluir el video participativo dentro las estrategias de monitero y evaluación para ser las más humanas, para ser las más incluyentes, y para genera más reporte con las comunidades”<sup>9</sup> (Webinar).

#### *Who is behind VGFC?*

This PV for M&E initiative was facilitated by InsightShare in partnership with Population Council Guatemala and funded by the Nike Foundation. It was established as a year-long project to assess and evaluate existing programs contributing to the development of adolescent girls as part of the Girl Effect with Nike Foundation partners and local organizations. In addition, VGFC was intended to position girls as leaders within their communities, providing them with the technical skills necessary to conduct the PV process and training them to become ‘junior facilitators,’ enabling them to share their new organizational, technical and life skills with other girls beyond the timeframe of the initiative. The program itself was led by InsightShare trainers, twelve girl trainees, and Population Council Guatemala’s coordinators.

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<sup>9</sup> Trans. I think it is important to include participatory video in the Monitoring & Evaluation strategies measuring strategies to be more human, to be more inclusive, and to generate more rapport with communities.

### *VGFC Methodology & Content*

By promoting this type of visual storytelling platform, Video Girls for Change was able to increase technological access for girls from marginalized communities so that they could facilitate further trainings of other adolescent girls and develop a culture of learning (InsightShare 18). This was accomplished as the girl-based PV trainee teams (composed of twelve trainees) supported by InsightShare trainers traveled to various communities to form story circles comprised of ten to fifteen people including various stakeholders in gender and youth development issues. For example, story circles in Guatemala were composed of girl club participants, girl leaders and interns, alumni, parents, and traditional authorities (InsightShare 23). Appendix H displays a table of the stakeholders involved and the regions in which they resided, including El Llano, Panimatzalam, Valparaiso, Rio Frio, Chuinimachicaj, and the Solola regions. These story circles would collect Most Significant Change stories through a question, such as “What has been the most significant change in your \_\_\_ (life, village, house, etc) over the last \_\_\_ (period of time)?” (InsightShare 23). The group would then discuss each of the stories and decide which was the most significant to them and for what reason. The more hot topic issues that emerged from the resulting stories were then captured using video to record the various group members’ perspectives. In addition, the selected story was recorded on video as a testimony. After gaining consent to publicize the material, the final film productions were shared through different channels, including the creation of an online platform distribution of DVDs as well as videos disseminated through targeted screenings (InsightShare 26). Appendix I contains a diagram of the Most Significant Change story collection process (InsightShare 25). More recently, the girl

trainees in Guatemala have been using online platforms, such as Facebook, Vimeo, and YouTube to broadcast video diaries and interviews (InsightShare 55).

Following the development of videos that conveyed the experiences and perspectives of adolescent girls living in poverty, the girls' voices were also amplified through film screenings within their communities and eventually at national and international levels. These film screenings involved a number of different audiences that were gender and age specific (girls, boys, adult women, and adult men groups) as well as having mixed audience screenings. InsightShare Senior Associate Soledad Muñoz explains, "In those small groups they could really discuss the perspectives of the men or the perspectives of the mothers or the perspectives of decision-makers" (like local politicians or heads of villages). This allowed InsightShare to witness and evaluate different reactions toward videos and beliefs about change among the various groups. It is important to acknowledge that the Girl Hub logframe currently used to evaluate programs of the Girl Effect movement was developed after this project and therefore does not apply to this initiative. Rather, VGFC used a series of learning questions as a framework to evaluate the PV MSC initiative that covered quality of output, innovation and training, participation, sustainability, and diffusion and dissemination. Appendix J presents these questions, methods of analysis, and indicators of success in series of tables and reported results. The film screenings provided an opportunity for various community members to discuss the subjects covered in the video. The story collection process and screening events helped to raise communal awareness to the challenges faced by girls as well as their needs and concerns. This was measured by collecting posts on websites, YouTube stats, and quotes after film screenings in order to analyze



the nature of responses from different audiences who watched the videos. The level of debate following each film also served as an indicator of the depth of understanding of the audience (InsightShare 54). An Abriendo Oportunidades Program Coordinator in Guatemala explains that the film productions serve a variety of functions to “be used at different stages in advocacy and fundraising, to incorporate our program into existing national initiatives, to support these clubs, and also to make the case for parents and leaders to allow the girls to participate” (InsightShare 22).

### *Potential for Empowerment and Limitations*

InsightShare claims that girls were able to increase their self-confidence through the PV process as well as to build trust and connections with other girls and acquire a variety of technical and life skills (InsightShare 10). In the VGFC program, the girl trainees analyzed the MSC stories to develop the following domain for ‘empowerment’: “growth in self-esteem, self-value, and recognizing your talents and skills” (InsightShare 29). While this definition encompasses the ‘power-within’ and ‘power-to’ dimensions of a more individualized conception of empowerment, I feel that it is important to also explore the collective element of empowerment, ‘power with.’ This is particularly relevant considering the frequency with which girl trainees and PV participants mentioned the importance of ‘relacionarse’<sup>10</sup> or connectivity in their testimonies. The following are quotes collected from girl leaders and PV participants regarding their experiences from the VGFC program that have been categorized into the dimensions of empowerment previously discussed:

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<sup>10</sup> Literally translates as ‘to relate to.’

Power within:

I've started to think more and more about my future and I know I can make what I want... I know I'm confident now and I know what to do (Anonymous, Guatemala, InsightShare 16).

The first time I've arrived here in this hotel I thought I was never going to be able to learn or to make a film, but now I know I'm capable (Gavi, Guatemala, Stage 1 Video Diary).

We have to value ourselves if other people criticize you, don't pay attention to them. You have to show that you are really capable. You can reach your goals and your objectives, achieve your dreams (Manuela Quino, Guatemala, VGFC Testimony).

Power to:

I'd like to put in practice what I've learnt in the training particularly with my family, because now I know we can assign roles, for example I can assign a task to my brother, one for my mother, and my mother to assign one to me, so we can all collaborate in the house (Hermelinda, Guatemala, Stage 2 Video Diary).

I dream for my future to work in something related to technology, be a reporter and share with people so they can reflect about things in Guatemala and about the things that are important for women (Nury, Guatemala, Stage 1 Video Diary).

I realized that as a woman I have the right to live, I have the right to defend my rights, that I should be respected and that I'm capable of doing anything (Maribel Gutierrez, Guatemala, VGFC Testimony).

We should make our own decisions because it's our life and it's no one else's (Maria Chicoj, Guatemala, VGFC Testimony).

Power with:

It's very important for us women to come here and share with all my friends, and with the girls in my community as well, I know they will get other knowledge through me (Ingrid, Guatemala, Stage 2 Video Diary).

I've learned how to love others and talk to them, and to work in teams to do tasks (Flora Judith Poou Cho, Guatemala, VGFC Testimony).

I was a participant of AO and I'm still here, so through my abilities I want to support it to find more donors for the program so it can continue in other communities, because I'm also the fruit of the program (Irma, Guatemala, Stage 3 Video Diary).

The group helps us to leave shyness behind, value ourselves and move on in life (Maria Luisa, Guatemala, VGFC Testimony).

The VGFC PV process discovered that girls most appreciated the help they received from Abriendo Oportunidades in growing their self-esteem, building a network of friends, and joining as a group to overcome issues that affect their lives (Webinar). Hilda Margarita Vasquez Cosigua, a VGFC girl leader explains, “Para mi fue muy bonita para participar como lidereza porque aprendí cómo hacer entrevistas en las calles, cómo relacionarme con las personas, y especialmente con otras comunidades”<sup>11</sup> (Webinar). She also acknowledges the value in this process in helping her to overcome her fears. Cosigua states,

Me ayudó porque yo decía que soy la única que vivía con estos problemas pero no. Me doy cuenta de que todas las niñas sufrieron lo mismo que yo y el programa me ayudó a perder el miedo a cómo defenderme y ahora me siento como señorita capaz y no quedo sufrir más violencia<sup>12</sup> (Webinar).

It is this notion of commonality that other girls also noted gave them strength to challenge obstacles in their own lives.

One of the most critical lessons that VGFC program facilitators and girl leaders alike agreed upon was the importance of including young leaders within the programming and as active participants in the research process. Angel del Valle asserts,

Este proceso nos demostró que es posible capacitar a las jóvenes, que es posible darles el entrenamiento necesario para que visibilizan que es el monitorero de evaluación que comprendan cuales son las dimensiones y

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<sup>11</sup> Trans. For me it was really nice to be able to participate as a leader because I learned how to conduct interviews in the streets, how to relate to other people and especially with other communities.

<sup>12</sup> Trans. It helped me because I thought that I was the only one that lived with these problems but that wasn't true. I realized that all girls suffer like I do and the program helped me to overcome my fear of defending myself and now I feel like a capable woman and do not passively suffer from more violence.

que se convierten en actoras activas dentro la recolección de datos de investigación que se hace para mejorar el programa.<sup>13</sup>

In placing girls at the center of the PV project, VGFC aimed to position girls as agents of change by training them to reach out to other girls. Several of the girls provided examples that could be considered elements of collective empowerment, primarily through their ability to identify and connect with one another by realizing similarities in their own lives and supporting each other through their struggles. However, they also emphasized the need to ‘relacionarse,’ or for greater connectivity within girl programming. While girls have been trained to communicate with other girl participants, they expressed a desire to “hablar con la familia para convencerlos... y hablar con autoridades para que aprueban la programa”<sup>14</sup> (VGFC Final Video Report). It is crucial that girls learn to discuss important issues that affect their lives, such as domestic violence, and explore new ideas around gender norms not only with their peers but also with their parents, as they can be critical enablers or blockers of change. Many of the girl participants identified mothers as enablers of change that support their daughter’s involvement in girl programming while fathers were often described as blockers of change through their tendency to abuse the women in the family and discourage their daughter’s participation in girl clubs as ‘a waste of time.’ Despite holding targeted film screenings for various community audiences, Muñoz acknowledged that adults are a crucial part of the PV process and “in order to create

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<sup>13</sup> Trans. This process demonstrated that it is possible to train young people, it is possible to provide the proper training needed to make visible the Monitoring & Evaluation to understand the dimensions and to become active participants in collecting data to improve the program.

<sup>14</sup> Trans. To speak with the family to convince them... and to speak to community leaders so that they support the program.

change in their [the girls'] lives, the adults have to be involved and not just informed in a way that this is happening.”

In addition to parental influence, boys also tend to be key players in girls' lives. The VGFC project discovered that many of the girls recommended providing boys only programs in addition to the programs for girls. “They were arguing that the fact that they were going to have more opportunities didn't necessarily mean that that was going to let them overcome certain things about boys” (Muñoz). It is evident that the girls themselves recognize the existence of gender norms as a significant factor that restricts their agency. While the girls acknowledged the importance of the Abriendo Oportunidades girl clubs in terms of their influence on their personal wellbeing and self-esteem, skills attainment, and social connectivity among their peers, they also identified the need to reaffirm the value of these girl focused programs to other community members. It is essential to elevate community engagement in conversation regarding the value of girl programming and even involve a wider variety of community members more actively throughout the PV process. It may be beneficial to include positive examples of male role models in girls' lives that can be shown at targeted film screenings. As Muñoz explained, “One of the key benefits of using PV is like making sure that you keep in the community agenda, in the adults agenda, that the girls are important... you need to keep convincing them of the value that.”

While the VGFC PV program in Guatemala showed potential to empower adolescent girls within their local communities, it is important to briefly address disadvantages of participatory video and evaluation processes. VGFC pursued a more community-based level of engagement that used participatory video and group

discussion to create space for empowerment. Specifically in the case of Guatemala, the PV project was targeted toward individual communities of indigenous and rural populations. In total approximately 1100 people participated in the participatory video process, including both those who shared and watched the testimonies. Due to the small scale of the initiative and the intensive nature of the MSC method, the PV process was able to involve local populations. As a collaborative process involving a number of different people with various perspectives, most of whom have never previously participated in a similar process, gathering people together and training them can be difficult and arduous, and decision-making can be very time consuming. Therefore, it is unlikely that such a small and time intensive initiative has the potential to enact transformative development, at least not for many generations. This method also relies heavily on establishing trust among all participants in the process, which means that issues of class distinction, status, and cultural differences may need to be addressed. Furthermore, it is critical to gain the parents' trust in seeking their support for their daughter's participation in the program. VGFC did not often have to overcome this obstacle as Abriendo Oportunidades already had years of experience engaging parents, community members, and stakeholders in their existing programs. The PV process therefore built on this existing participatory environment. It is important to note that the lack of a similar foundation might serve as a critical limitation in other places where it can be very difficult to navigate rigid power structures.

## **Discussion**

### **Program Objectives and Needs of Intended Beneficiaries**

The Girl Effect movement aims to position adolescent girls to use social communications platforms, such as magazine, radio, and participatory video to share critical issues that affect their lives and initiate community conversation about their potential. The use of these branded social communications in the Girl Hub draws from marketing approaches that seek to create a set of ideas and values for girls to believe in and aspire to by providing them with positive multidimensional role models. At the heart of the movement's strategy to elevate girls' agency through these platforms is the assumption that greater voice and wider publication of voices drives greater agency. As previously discussed, the Nike Foundation defines agency as "The ability to act and fulfill potentials in society; to have and make use of life opportunities, and to have voice and take part in decision-making" (Crawford 9). It is easy to be critical of this definition of agency because "fulfill potentials" alludes to a neoliberal vision of what potential is for adolescent girls. It is possible to interpret this phrasing as an assumption about freedom that relies on Western liberal tradition, focused principally on achieving individuality. This can be disempowering in itself to an individual, particularly when that individual may be part of a broader collective. Critics may also argue that this idea of freedom to "fulfill potentials" in reality relies on business logic that promotes girls as consumers or entrepreneurs rather than citizens first. Therefore, it is important to compare and contrast what "potential" means from a Western perspective relative to

local beliefs about what it means to fulfill one's potential. We have to look at the agency of adolescent girls within the context of her family and social environment.

It is evident that the movement is making girls more visible in their societies and bringing greater awareness to the challenges that they face, at least among other girls and on a more local, community scale. According to Foucault's conceptualization of power as a socialized phenomenon, these girls become subject to the Nike Foundation's discourse of girlhood which claims that they lack power. Freire would also argue that it is the development of critical consciousness which allows individuals to overcome their oppressed state, an important aspect of the Girl Effect which again assumes that girls lack access to real power and perceived value within their communities. Many discourses and institutions, in the name of progress, position those they talk about in ways that make them participants in their own disempowerment. One of the most important components of the Girl Effect communications platforms is their participatory nature. In Rwanda and Ethiopia, their content is driven by studies on attitudes and behaviors toward adolescent girls and in Guatemala by girls' stories themselves. All three platforms also closely involve girls in the design, guidance, implementation, and analysis of the studies as well as being the central actors of the platforms themselves. However, working towards girl empowerment as a strategy for poverty reduction does not imply that girls solely need to be the target of these initiatives. Sensitizing girls and women to gender inequalities is not enough, as they continue to function in public and private domains that can be unreceptive to changes in the status quo. As such, girls and women can face even greater backlash to challenging these structures on their own. The entire community needs to be involved in order to efficiently work toward girl



empowerment and dismantle harmful social constructions of masculine and feminine identities. This includes analyzing the consequences for boys and men in addition to girls and women for all aspects of these initiatives. The movement is starting to look to connect with other community members, such as through the film screenings in Guatemala, road shows and concerts in Rwanda and Ethiopia, and the creation of positive male figures in the *Yegna* radio drama. However, it is not doing enough to engage girls and boys in direct conversation or interactive activities to help them challenge traditional masculinities that reinforce restrictive gender norms.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation efforts, the Girl Hub attempts to measure agency through freedom from violence, control over sexual and reproductive health, economic activity, and education with additional indicators of self-confidence, supportive social networks, and other community members' attitudes toward gender equality. I have primarily found issues with their first two indicators used to measure agency. While the Girl Hub attempts to measure freedom from violence by evaluating attitudes toward wife beating, preliminary audience response surveys have found that attitudinal shifts toward gender norms do not necessarily initiate behavioral change. Likewise, it is important to note that using indicators like age of marriage and first birth are not all encompassing measurements of control over sexual and reproductive rights. It is very difficult to know the complete set of factors and the extent of their influence, such as violence, ill-health, lack of infrastructure and access to health care, and restrictive social norms among others that prevent girls and women from 'fulfilling potentials' in a particular context. The social communications platforms must be accompanied by structural changes and complementary policies related to overcoming

infrastructural deficiencies in order to enable true transformative development. This is particularly important in rural areas where schools are so scarce that the distance required to attend them is often considered to be too far and unsafe for girls. The same is true for access to quality health care facilities. In addition, without better access to water, fuel, and electricity, it will be difficult to create any real change in girls lives. Their social lives are often constrained by security concerns in public spaces and their energy many times substitutes for the absence of electricity. Sustainable solutions must be developed to reduce the amount of time that girls spend completing domestic chores, such as innovating time-saving technologies like solar ovens, water point mapping and tube wells for rural communities so that girls can spend less time gathering firewood and fetching water and more time studying. At the same time, changing community perceptions about girls' value is extremely important to ensure that the introduction of new technologies will not simply shift girls' responsibilities to other time-draining domestic activities.

For the most part, the three initiatives that I researched have resisted a "one-size-fits-all" approach by using country-specific data to build evidence-based interventions through quantitative and qualitative surveys to understand girls' diverse experiences. This means that the Girl Hub has collected data and insights from girls and other members of various communities in order to identify and begin addressing some of the most serious factors inhibiting girl empowerment. Likewise, the VGFC project in Guatemala included young girl leaders in both the PV programming and as active participants in the research process. It does appear that the movement is trying to adapt the discourse of its social communications platforms to better address country-specific

social realities and the needs expressed by those girls. While the Girl Effect movement theory of change rhetoric draws from Sen's capability approach that was initially designed to provide non-economic measures of development, it seeks to appeal to mainstream development discourse according to economic outcomes by focusing more on the financial potential of impoverished adolescent girls. The Nike Foundation claims that amplifying girls' voices and increasing their agency can yield economic dividends. Critics argue that this focus on economic development prioritizes the wellbeing of the economy over the wellbeing of girls and women. This perspective notes that increasing women's participation in the global labor force may not be empowering in the context of a labor market that exerts pressure on keeping wages and standards for working conditions low. Furthermore, they claim that this approach designed to empower women to participate in the market and lift themselves out of poverty cannot work on a large scale without market regulations and state subsidies that support small enterprises.

It is unclear how the potential for economic outcomes influences the motives behind the movement, but I believe it is incorrect to dismiss the project on the grounds that it follows a smart economics approach. One could argue that women's empowerment is a positive outcome regardless of who promotes it and despite a possible underlying capitalist agenda. Regardless of its potential to facilitate economic growth, gender equality in developing countries should be viewed as a worthwhile goal in and of itself. The international development sector is constantly under pressure to achieve results quickly and the Girl Effect programs are time intensive and seek to achieve vast changes in attitudes and behaviors that are rooted in community values and beliefs. These communications based interventions also require heavy up-front funding,

which raises concern regarding their sustainability. In order to catalyze partnerships and appeal to other global players, including government and donor programs, the Girl Effect movement has to show that tangible changes in the lives of adolescent girls can lead to wider economic and social development. While these changes remain to be seen, I argue that girl's empowerment should not be limited to a means of reducing poverty, but should also be stated as a goal in itself. Rather than revolving the movement around the instrumental value of increasing girl's voice and agency, it should focus more on the intrinsic value of this change. Female agency should be identified for its importance on three different levels. First, for its intrinsic relevance for individual wellbeing as girls have equal rights to human dignity and self-determination, including freedom from violence and access to good health, education, and participation in economic and political life. Second, for its instrumental relevance through actions that improve the wellbeing of females and their families. Third, for its role in enabling women to become more active participants in shaping institutions, social norms and the wellbeing of their communities.

### **'Power within' and 'Power to'**

As previously outlined, the Nike Foundation's conceptualization of agency is primarily concerned with 'power to' and 'power over' elements of empowerment. While the Nike Foundation does not offer a concrete definition of empowerment, its strategy to leverage girl agency and improve their self-esteem by positioning girls to learn from one another and identify with other girls' stories reflects the 'power within' dimension of empowerment. The 'power within' dimension seems to be the aspect of empowerment most frequently expressed in all three initiatives. Most often, girl leaders,

program initiators, and other girls in the community spoke to the potential of the Girl Effect movement programs to foster individual empowerment, primarily through improving self-confidence and self-esteem.

It can also be argued that the Girl Effect initiatives are helping some girls to realize aspects of the ‘power to’ dimension of empowerment. This was evident by expressions of knowledge growth related to key issues effecting girls’ lives and a greater understanding of the power dynamics working to reinforce existing gender inequalities. Not only are girls beginning to realize that they share challenges in common, but to a limited extent, boys in their communities are becoming more aware of gender disparities and the specific obstacles that girls often face. It is important to note that these transformations have not been observed on a large scale. As discussed earlier, Freire’s idea of “conscientization” where individuals understand their marginalized reality provides the foundation for empowerment to occur. Initial feedback of Ni Nyampinga, Yegna, and VGFC suggests that these social communications platforms are helping some of the girls that they reach to understand their position in society and the gender norms working to reinforce that marginalized position. In addition, the Girl Effect movement seeks to help girls overcome the effects of internalized oppression by fostering Kabeer’s positive dimension of agency where girls feel worthy of a better life. Without this sense of self-value, (on their own terms) girls will be unable to formulate goals and act on them in order to change their situation. The feedback from various stakeholders suggests that girls who engage in these social communications platforms more often express feelings of self-acceptance and a greater desire to make decisions about their future. However, opportunities for girls to participate in decision making

that directly affects them appear to remain limited as gender norms are deeply entrenched within fairly rigid structures. It is important to acknowledge that opportunities for girls in the regions under study often vary between rural and urban settings, but even girls with higher levels of education and employment opportunities and greater access to information may not be entirely free to choose how to live their lives. For instance, even in Rwanda where there is one of the highest women's political participation rates in the world, there is a huge disconnect between gender equality rhetoric at the governmental level and the reality that girls face at a societal level.

### **'Power with'**

Perhaps the area with the greatest potential for improvement is collective empowerment through the 'power with' dimension. One of the most significant limitations to the Girl Effect movement's approach toward gendered empowerment is their almost exclusive focus on autonomy and agency through individual empowerment efforts. This is important for three reasons. First, there are numerous socio-political structures that actively shape and limit the efficacy of individual agency. Second, for empowerment to have a transformative effect on society, it must be viewed as a process that exists at individual and group levels. Individual girls and women cannot take control over their lives they, together with others, can also change the gendered power structures that subordinate women on a societal level. Furthermore, a law that prohibits violence against women is unlikely to have much of an impact on women's ability to change their situation until they feel worthy of safety and are able to act together to ensure actual enforcement of laws and protection of legal rights. Third, an individualist frame coincides with viewing persons more as potential consumers rather than as

citizens, with the kind of power necessary to transform a society. This makes it more difficult for the Girl Effect movement to address critics who say the movement can be reduced primary motives to expand the reach of corporate markets within a wholly neo-liberal ideology. While at least some of my findings suggest this is not the case, even if it were, other findings also suggest the positive unintended consequences involving true empowerment of girls could arise from programs intended to be wholly market oriented in design. Also, it remains to be seen if a new form of power might not be able to arise from consumers themselves that might further the agenda of human development through collective processes over purely economic models of development. The Girl Effect movement is primarily focused on helping girls to analyze their situation to identify the inhibiting factors in their lives, such as domestic violence, women's low status, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and their lack of resources and access to decision-making structures. However, it is not enough to target girls alone. While there may be isolated cases of success, on a broad scale girls generally cannot change their lives on their own. Families, teachers, mentors and community attitudes coupled with government policies all influence girls' opportunities and determine what girls can and cannot do.

The Girl Effect movement itself states that investing in girls before they reach adulthood and amplifying their voices and perspectives in their communities will lead to empowering girls by helping them to gain greater agency and control over their own lives. According to this theory, the empowered girls will have a positive, multiplier effect on their future children, developing healthier and more educated individuals and ultimately transforming society. In order to transform society, the Girl Effect movement

needs to adopt a more holistic approach to their social communications platforms and outreach efforts. Gender equality cannot occur if girls, boys, men and women are not invested. Many times boys and men are unaware of the effect that gender roles have in society. It is equally important that girls first have the confidence and knowledge themselves to participate in conversations around gender equality and girl empowerment as it is that those figures influencing girls' lives are working alongside them to help establish circumstances where girls can create and achieve their own goals. The movement needs to more effectively engage boys, parents, traditional authorities, and the wider community to change perceptions toward social norms around inhibiting factors like violence, marriage, reproduction, household gender roles, and the roles of women and men in the public sphere. This 'power with' dimension of collective empowerment is the area in which the movement is most lacking. The Yegna Connections girl clubs in Ethiopia, Girl Ambassadors network in Rwanda, and PV film screenings in Guatemala are promising initial steps, but they have just scratched the surface. There is a growing demand for the creation of safe and inclusive community spaces for girls to meet, talk, play, and learn in order to foster collective action. Considering the collectivistic orientation of the communities under study, it seems that the Girl Effect movement could more effectively enact change by leveraging both girls and boys clubs and facilitating conversation among other community members, especially parents. It is likely that this process would require partnering with local development agencies, including more peace corp volunteers and other nonprofits focused on working toward women's empowerment and alleviating poverty.



In Ethiopia this could also include utilizing youth center spaces, which is particularly useful for boys as they are more likely than girls to frequent these types of public places. In fact, an Ethiopian Young Adult Survey reported that eleven percent of boys compared to six percent of girls had ever been to a youth center (UNFPA et. al). The survey also showed that girls were more likely than boys to report visiting the center for personal development or services, such as skills training. Likewise, having better job opportunities was ranked among the top three priorities for both girls and boys in the My World survey for Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Guatemala. Therefore, in order to attract more adolescents to participate in girls and boys clubs and visit youth center spaces, the movement could also incorporate skills training into their girl-focused curriculum. In addition, the curriculum could be revised within these groups to provide culturally and age appropriate education on reproductive health and safety, as it is important that girls and boys have equal access to a full range of health information and services. One of the methods that the Guatemalan VGFC team explored was using a PV drama activity immediately after filming the selected testimony. The team found that using drama was often more effective in enabling groups to express themselves on sensitive issues like reproductive and sexual health education and overcoming bullying. This approach also provided mothers with a safe space to reflect their understanding of what the girls do in the clubs as well as the issues they face in their daily lives. Another aspect of the MSC selection process involved filming short PV dramas as a way for each group to explain why a particular story was selected as being the most significant change. Due to the popularity of drama in Ethiopian culture and the nature of the *Yegna* radio show as a type of soap opera, I suggest that conversation groups might also

explore drama activities as a way to approach sensitive topics and gain greater group involvement.

While resource intensive, I believe that the movement's potential to empower girls will be greater if the Girl Hub's branded communications platforms develop alongside participatory, interactive workshops designed to sensitize and educate both girls and boys to gender issues that apply to their lived realities. This may include facilitating gender discussions in schools, organizing gender camps and workshops during school holidays, creating platforms where students from different schools can work together on gender projects, or establishing competitions for girls and boys to interact with one another where participation across genders is required. One group that facilitates similar activities is Girl Up Rwanda, which is a girl-led empowerment club led by students at the Gashora Girls Academy. They organize discussions, debates, and outlets for feedback in order to challenge gendered social constructions. Another example includes Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), which are summer camps organized by peace corp volunteers to encourage self confidence among young women and challenge them to look beyond traditional gender roles. These camps create a safe and supportive environment for learning, cultural exchange, leadership development, and fun activities. They also serve as an outlet for girls to be exposed to new perspectives and develop friendships with one another. Creating these types of safe spaces for learning how to strategize and navigate life by interacting with peers is also an important resource for future support in case of severe pressures and practical emergencies. Goal setting and planning should be an important component of the interactive workshops that develop in congruence with the Girl Effect social

communications platforms. While girls are developing greater self-confidence and access to reliable information, this personal strength should be guided toward setting realistic goals that appeal to their true abilities and self-awareness. The process of setting goals involves thinking about personal values and the direction that one would like their life to follow. Creating a plan to achieve those goals that is both specific and realistic is an equally important step in taking greater control over one's own life and essential to the process of individual empowerment. I acknowledge that my suggestions for improving these models for achieving empowerment do not seek to be universally applied strategies as I believe that empowerment is locally contextualized and therefore unlikely to be easily transferable to other locations and cultural environments.

We cannot forget that scale is achieved at the policy level, where governments are responsible for implementing the national laws that they establish. Laws tend to be weakest in areas regulating relations within households as social norms become particularly binding where increasing girls' agency would threaten the balance of power in the household. For instance, Ethiopia raised its legal age of marriage to eighteen in the year 2000 and banned FGM in 2005, but the lack of enforcement has meant that traditions of child marriage and female circumcision still remain entrenched in many communities. The same is true of policies concerning domestic violence. Governments are also the largest providers of services, including education and healthcare. Their active participation in initiating policies and projects to increase girls' access to these institutions is a key component of transformative development. This is especially important considering that girls aged 15 and below and women aged 16-30 ranked "A good education" and "Better healthcare" as their most important priorities in the 2015

My World Survey in both Rwanda and Ethiopia. In Guatemala, girls aged 15 and below also ranked “A good education” and “Better healthcare” as their most important priorities while women aged 16-30 ranked “Protection against crime and violence” as their second top priority over health care. This indicates that changing attitudes and behaviors toward gender norms needs to be accompanied by government policies and infrastructure policies that address the needs of girls. The Girl Hub anticipates that their social communications platforms will drive partnerships and action for girls at scale, including “policies in health, family planning, education, jobs, entitlement to assets and inheritance that explicitly recognize girls” (Girl Hub Logframe). It is too early to know if these platforms have the potential to effect this type of change, but I believe it is crucial that government is a more active participant in the process of change that the Girl Effect movement is attempting to achieve. This is not to say that institutionalizing gender equality by passing laws against harmful gender-related practices or offenses like gender based violence is sufficient in itself, as the actual implementation of such measures requires attitudinal change at the societal level. I am referring to a sort of teamwork to change the costs or benefits of complying with prevailing norms by providing incentives (government initiative) and knowledge-based information (movement initiative) needed for people to challenge them. In summary, a comprehensive agenda to development should stimulate changes in harmful social norms and redress gender inequality by creating social resources for girls and their families and generating greater health benefits from investments in education. At the same time, it is a question about the order of change. If girls’ expectations are changed but structures are not, then girls’ opportunities will still be constrained by the larger

system. Therefore, structures much change alongside the empowerment of girls so that they can take advantage of life opportunities and greater decision-making abilities.

## **Conclusion**

The Girl Effect movement seeks to use communications platforms to reposition girls in society in order to unleash ‘the girl effect,’ which posits that investing in girls will help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The value of this movement is not necessarily its economic potential as the Girl Effect theory of change suggests, although that is a supplementary benefit. I believe that the true value of these communications platforms is their potential to provide girls with information to help them analyze the socioeconomic realities and power structures at work in their own lives and to help expand conversations about girl empowerment within diverse communities. To be more effective these platforms must be more oriented around families, communities and governments rather than girls alone because these entities determine what girls can and cannot do. It is still possible to maintain a girl focus using girls’ voices to drive these platforms, but the movement needs to explore more action-based ways of connecting with other members of society, such as stimulating community dialogue through conversation clubs and interactive workshops. This means involving boys and men directly in dialogues and activities that parallel those of girls and women to change the social and cultural paradigms that perpetuate and seek to justify gender inequalities. We must engage both genders in processes that challenge the power dynamics of existing gender roles that subordinate women to their male counterparts, including the ways in which boys and men are disadvantaged by expectations of traditional masculine identities.

While initial feedback indicates that some girls who have directly engaged with the Girl Effect communications platforms are beginning to realize elements of increased

agency and individual empowerment, particularly as they relate to the ‘power within’ and ‘power to’ dimensions, I believe that the movement has potential to inspire greater collective empowerment. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the Girl Effect Movement is still very young and a longitudinal study is required to more effectively evaluate its impact on the communities in which its initiatives operate. I also understand that the impact of empowerment programs like the Girl Effect depends on the socioeconomic conditions and political context of the area they seek to effect as well as the unique histories of the intended beneficiaries. Concurrently, it would be narrow-minded to ignore the influence of structural constraints and infrastructure deficiencies that reinforce girls’ position in society.

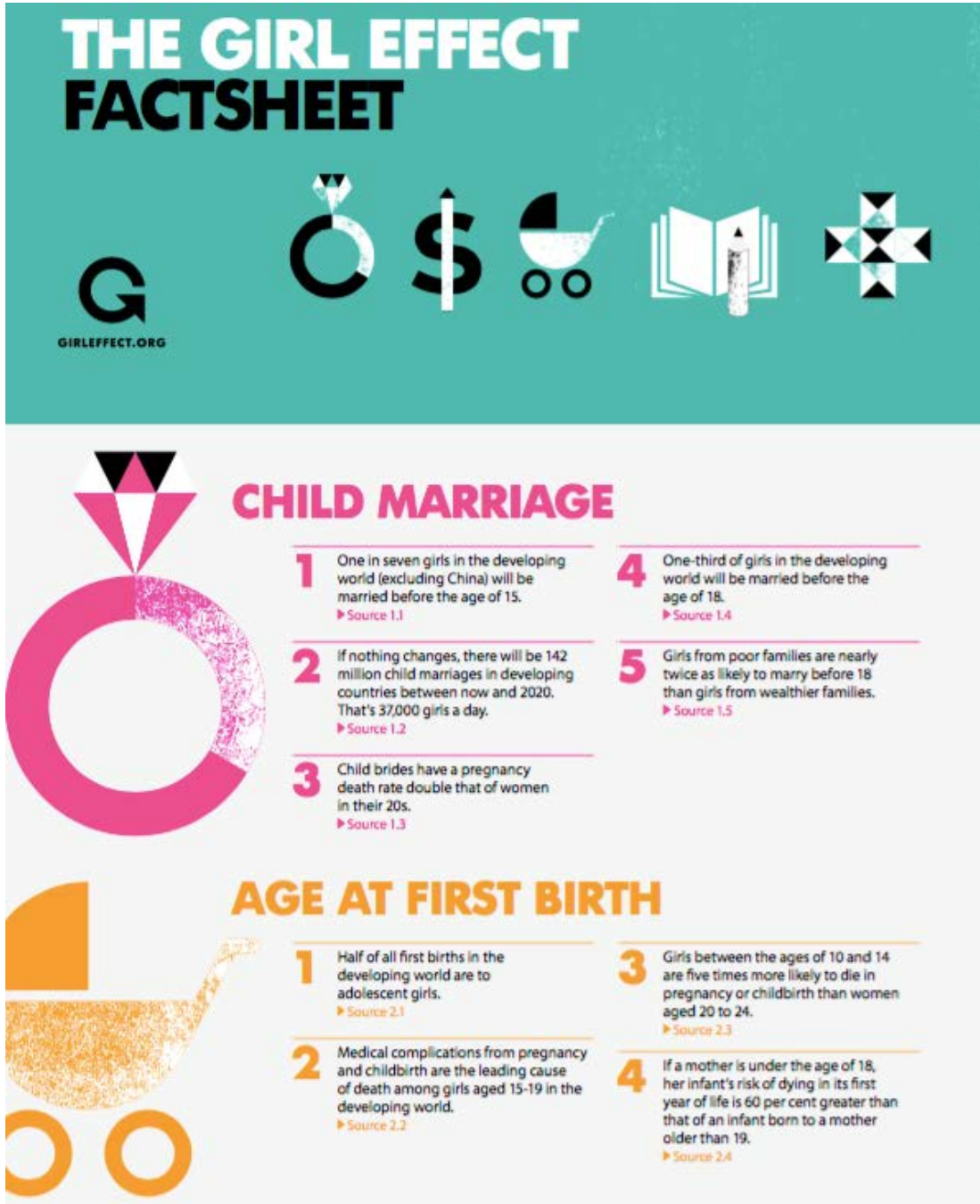
I do not think that these initiatives on their own can challenge the rigid division of labor and institutionalized power structures that subordinate women at local, national, and global levels. Transformative development entails the collective participation of governments, development agencies, and civil society to facilitate girl empowerment. With its girl focused initiatives the Girl Effect movement should also be careful to avoid further burdening women who often already have a very large workload and creating more obstacles in the way of their empowerment. As development policies continue to adapt a ‘girl-powering’ agenda to solve the world’s problems, I hope that they will work toward aligning their project objectives with the needs and expectations of the individual lives they seek to empower. This means evaluating a girl’s potential outside of her economic or welfare capacity and setting a more holistic empowerment process in motion.

## **Appendices**

- A. The Girl Effect Factsheet
- B. The Girl Effect Dividend
- C. Girl Hub Logframe
- D. Ni Nyampinga Magazine, Issue 4
- E. Girl Impact Map Rwanda
- F. Yegna Radio Series 1
- G. English Translation of Abet
- H. VGFC Stakeholder Table
- I. MSC Story Collection Process
- J. VGFC Learning Questions Table



## Appendix A:





## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- 1** Closing the joblessness gap between girls and their male counterparts would yield an increase in GDP of up to 1.2 per cent in a single year.  
▶ Source 3.1
- 2** An extra year of primary school education boosts girls' eventual wages by 10–20 per cent. An extra year of secondary school adds 15–25 per cent.  
▶ Source 3.2
- 3** Giving women the same access to non-land resources and services as men could increase yields on women's land by up to 30 per cent, raise total agricultural output in developing countries by up to four per cent and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 100–150 million.  
▶ Source 3.3



## EDUCATION

- 1** When a girl in the developing world receives seven years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.  
▶ Source 4.1
- 2** Secondary school completion rates for adolescent girls is below five per cent in 19 sub-Saharan African countries.  
▶ Source 4.2
- 3** In sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than one in five girls makes it to secondary school.  
▶ Source 4.3
- 4** Girls who stay in school during adolescence have a later sexual debut, are less likely to be subjected to forced sex and, if sexually active, are more likely to use contraception than their age peers who are out of school.  
▶ Source 4.4
- 5** There are still 31 million girls of primary school age out of school. Of these 17 million are expected never to enter school.  
▶ Source 4.5



## HEALTH + SAFETY

- 1** Worldwide, nearly 50 per cent of all sexual assaults are against girls aged 15 years or younger.  
▶ Source 5.1
- 2** Among those whose first experience of sexual intercourse was forced, 31 per cent were less than 15 years old at the time. Another 14 per cent were aged between 15 and 17.  
▶ Source 5.2
- 3** 76% of young people aged 15–25 who live with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are female.  
▶ Source 5.3
- 4** Each year, an estimated three million girls experience genital mutilation or cutting.  
▶ Source 5.4
- 5** If current trends continue, as many as 30 million girls are at risk of genital mutilation or cutting before their 15th birthday.  
▶ Source 5.5

## Appendix B:

# THE GIRL EFFECT DIVIDEND

GIRLS ARE THE WORLD'S GREATEST UNTAPPED RESOURCE. INVESTMENTS IN GIRLS HAVE SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC RETURNS. THESE RETURNS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO UPLIFT ENTIRE ECONOMIES. RECENT WORK SHOWS JUST HOW POWERFUL THE GIRL EFFECT DIVIDEND IS.



## Appendix C:

SUPER GOAL	Indicator	Baseline
5 million adolescent girls live in safety and can make choices over their lives	% women aged 15-19 ever married	Rwanda: (2006 Youth data set) 7% / (2008 IDHS) 2.6% Nigeria: (State level) (2006 Youth data set) 33% / (2008 DHS) 28.7% Ethiopia: (2006 Youth data set) 30% / (2011 DHS) 19.1% <b>Source</b> 2006 Youth Data Set: <a href="http://www.prb.org/pdf06/WorldsYouth2006DataSheet.pdf">http://www.prb.org/pdf06/WorldsYouth2006DataSheet.pdf</a> Rwanda: Interim Demographic & Health Survey, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/fr215/fr215.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/fr215/fr215.pdf</a> Nigeria: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf</a> Ethiopia: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2011, <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf</a>
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>
	% women aged 15-19 ever given birth	Rwanda: (2008 IDHS) 4.5% Nigeria: (State level) (2008 DHS) 18% / (2006) 123/1000 (MDGs) Ethiopia: (2011 DHS) 10.1% <b>Source</b> Rwanda: Interim Demographic & Health Survey, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/fr215/fr215.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/fr215/fr215.pdf</a> Nigeria: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf</a> MDG - <a href="http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx">http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx</a> Ethiopia: Demographic & Health Survey, 2011: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf</a>
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>
	Secondary school completion (sex disaggregated)	Rwanda: (2010 DHS) 2.9%, females aged 15-24 yr old / 2.6% men aged 15-24 yr old Nigeria: (2008 DHS) 20.4% females aged 15-24 yr old / 25.8% 15-24 yr old (State level) / 4% of women in Northern Nigeria (Gender in Nigeria Report 2012) Ethiopia: (2011 DHS) 0.4% females aged 15-24 yr old / 0.2% men aged 15-24 yr old <b>Source</b> Rwanda: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2010: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR259/FR259.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR259/FR259.pdf</a> Nigeria: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf</a> Gender in Nigeria Report, 2012, DFID & British Council: <a href="http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/Gender-Nigeria2012.pdf">http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/Gender-Nigeria2012.pdf</a> Ethiopia: Demographic & Health Survey, 2011: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf</a>
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>
	Percentage of economically active adolescents aged 15-19 years (sex disaggregated)	Rwanda: (2006 Youth Data) Females 81%, Males 85% Nigeria: (2006 Youth Data) Females 34%, Males 57% Ethiopia: (2006 Youth Data) Females 53%, Males 58% <b>Source</b> <a href="http://www.prb.org/pdf06/WorldsYouth2006DataSheet.pdf">http://www.prb.org/pdf06/WorldsYouth2006DataSheet.pdf</a>
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>			
	% girls 15-19 who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife	Rwanda: (2010 DHS) 55.7% Nigeria: (State level) (2008 DHS) 40.3% Ethiopia: (2011 DHS) 64.1%			
		<b>Source</b>			
		Rwanda: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2010: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR259/FR259.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR259/FR259.pdf</a> Nigeria: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2008: <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR222/FR222.pdf</a> Ethiopia: Demographic & Health Surveys, 2011, <a href="http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf">http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf</a>			
<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>			<b>Target (May 2015)</b>
Girls' voice, value and agency within society is increased	Proportion of girls who report confidence in being able to achieve their goals in life (self-belief and agency)	Rwanda: 79.4% Nigeria : 80%			5% improvement over baseline
		<b>Source</b>			
		Baseline data from Quantitative Attitudinal Studies conducted in Nigeria (2012) and Rwanda (2012). <sup>1</sup>			
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target (May 2014)</b>	<b>Target (May 2015)</b>	
	Proportion of girls reporting having supportive social networks, including the bottom 40% of girls <sup>2</sup>	Rwanda: 22.94% Nigeria:17%			10% improvement over baseline
	<b>Source: Disaggregated into the bottom 40% of girls</b>				
	Baseline data from Quantitative Attitudinal Studies conducted in Nigeria (2012) and Rwanda (2012). <sup>1</sup>				
	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target (May 2014)</b>	<b>Target (May 2015)</b>	
	Proportion of boys', parents' and gatekeepers' reporting positive attitudes towards gender equality in education, income generation and community civic participation	Rwanda: 64.49% boys disagree with negative statements regarding gender equality; 73.18% parents/caregivers disagree with negative statements Nigeria: 41% of boys, 37% of men, and 23% of fathers disagreed with the statement that girls can make as good leaders as boys; 30% approx believe it's OK for man to hit his wife if she does something wrong			Rwanda: 5% improvement over baseline Nigeria: 10% improvement over baseline
		<b>Source</b>			
	Baseline data from Quantitative Attitudinal Studies conducted in Nigeria (2012) and Rwanda (2012). <sup>1</sup>				

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Milestone (May 2013)</b>	<b>Target (May 2014)</b>	<b>Target (May 2015)</b>
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Social communications, evidence and partnerships drive action for girls at scale	Increased number of girls attending girl groups outside the home and church/mosque at least once per month, (dissagregated by vulnerable groups, as per criteria), as a result of GH's influence and co-design support	Rwanda: 600 girls attending 12+ pilot girl groups (2011) Nigeria: 0 girls attending girl groups in DFID funded state level programmes (in Northern Nigeria 2011)	Rwanda: 12,000 additional girls attending girls' groups at least once per month Nigeria: 33,000 additional girls (since 2011) attending girls' groups at least once per month	Rwanda: 12,000 additional girls attending girls groups at least once per month (50% vulnerable) Nigeria: 20,000 girls (20% vulnerable) <sup>3</sup>	Rwanda: 67,000 additional girls attending girls groups at least once per month (50% vulnerable) Nigeria: 75,000 additional girls attending girls groups at least once per month (20% vulnerable)
		<b>Source</b>			
		Project monitoring reports (Nigeria safe space projects; Rwanda 12+, AFR) [criteria: show contribution to increasing the number of girls attending groups outside the home through: i. partnering with implementing orgs to deliver safe spaces; ii. Catalysing community of practice through capacity building workshops (GEU); iii. ongoing support to alumni including sharing resources and good practice examples; iv. providing girl expertise to the design and deliery of programmes.			
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Milestone (May 2013)</b>	<b>Target (May 2014)</b>	<b>Target (May 2015)</b>	
Number of policies eg, in health, family planning, education, jobs, entitlement to assets and inheritance that explicitly recognise girls (Rwanda, Nigeria state level)	Rwanda: 0 Nigeria: 0	No milestone set	Rwanda: 3 Nigeria: 2	Rwanda: 4 Nigeria: 3	
<b>Source</b>					
National policy audit					
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>		<b>Target (May 2014)</b>	<b>Target (May 2015)</b>	
Build recognition of adolescent girls into the post-2015 development framework	Little or no explicit recognition of adolescent girls as a distinct group in the	No milestone set	Adolescent girls included in aspects of the UN led post-MDG process, e.g. consultation, evidence,	New post-2015 framework reflect specific focus on adolescent girls, as well as	

		post MDG dialogue		advocacy, outcome documentation	commitment to data disaggregation for visibility of adolescent girls, reflected in the language, goals and targets of the post-2015 framework.
<b>Source</b>					
Independent expert opinion to be determine; stakeholdre interviews; post MDG documentation, agreed goals and targets; GH process documentation and activity reports					

## Appendix D:

**UBUZIMA**



**ACCESS** 

**TEENAGE MOTHERS**

**The number of teen pregnancies is increasing. What is starting to become clear is that it is mostly not the girls' fault. Mukanyandwei Josiane and Nyiranizeyimana Benitha are two women who were teenagers when they had children.**

**Written & Photography by Christine Kampire**

In Rwanda, the issue of teen pregnancies is still topical. There is an increase in the number of pregnancies every year. In 2010, 31% of girls were teen mothers compared to 26% in 2007. This year's statistics have not yet been released.

Josiane is 17 years old and has two children. She could not finish school as a result. When she was in P6 and aged 14, she was raped by her mother's co-worker at Kinonko market. She had gone to the market to help her mother. The man was arrested and charged under the law that protects girls and sentenced to five years in jail.

Josiane was mistreated by her parents and forced to do physically demanding duties like fetching water and walking for two hours per day to take her mother food.

"I didn't want my friends to find out about the pregnancy and when they came to pick me up to go to school I would tell them I was sick. I would wear tight clothes on the bottom half of my body, a loose-fitting top and tie rope around my waist. If I had eaten at lunchtime, I wouldn't eat at night.

"I didn't go to the doctor's even once when I was pregnant. My parents only found out that I was pregnant when I began to show."

Josiane went into labour when she was at home alone at about eight in the morning. At first, she thought it was food poisoning because she didn't understand what was going on. She didn't make a fuss and thought it would pass, but when her father came home at about 10 a.m. to change his clothes, he found her writhing on the floor. He immediately called her mother and they took her to the hospital. The baby was delivered under Caesarean section but it was stillborn.

Before the epidural could wear off, her mother asked that Josiane be given a contraceptive injection that lasts three months. They give it to her even though

**22**

**N NYAMPINGA**

**JUL - AUG 2012**





Josiene didn't want it. She spent three days in hospital and then went home.

Josiene says that although she did not bring the pregnancy upon herself and did not want to have a child, she regrets the fact the baby died. She says it grieves her to think of the baby and blames its death on her parents who abandoned her during the pregnancy and did not advise her in any way.

Dr Bosco Bahosho, who is 38 and has been practicing medicine for 10 years now, says that girls aged 12-19 who get pregnant are at risk of giving birth to stillborn babies because they have not been informed on how to take the necessary care by their parents. Most of them do not go to the doctor's for medical tests throughout the pregnancy or have sufficient prenatal care.

It is therefore important that you learn from these girls' stories. It is not uncommon for a baby to be in the wrong position in the womb and it is important that doctors remedy this in the first trimester. If it happens more than once early in the pregnancy then the chances of a miscarriage are increased because the body has not yet adjusted to the changes. If

physical exertion is added to the equation, as in Josiene's case, then it is important to go to the local healthcare unit so that they can monitor the pregnancy closely and provide enough prenatal care.

Dr Bahosho also said that a large number of pregnant teens do not want to eat for fear that their bellies will show. But he warned: "The lack of a balanced diet can cause the baby to be born with low weight because it has not received enough nutrients during the pregnancy. The mother may also experience light-headedness two to three days after giving birth."

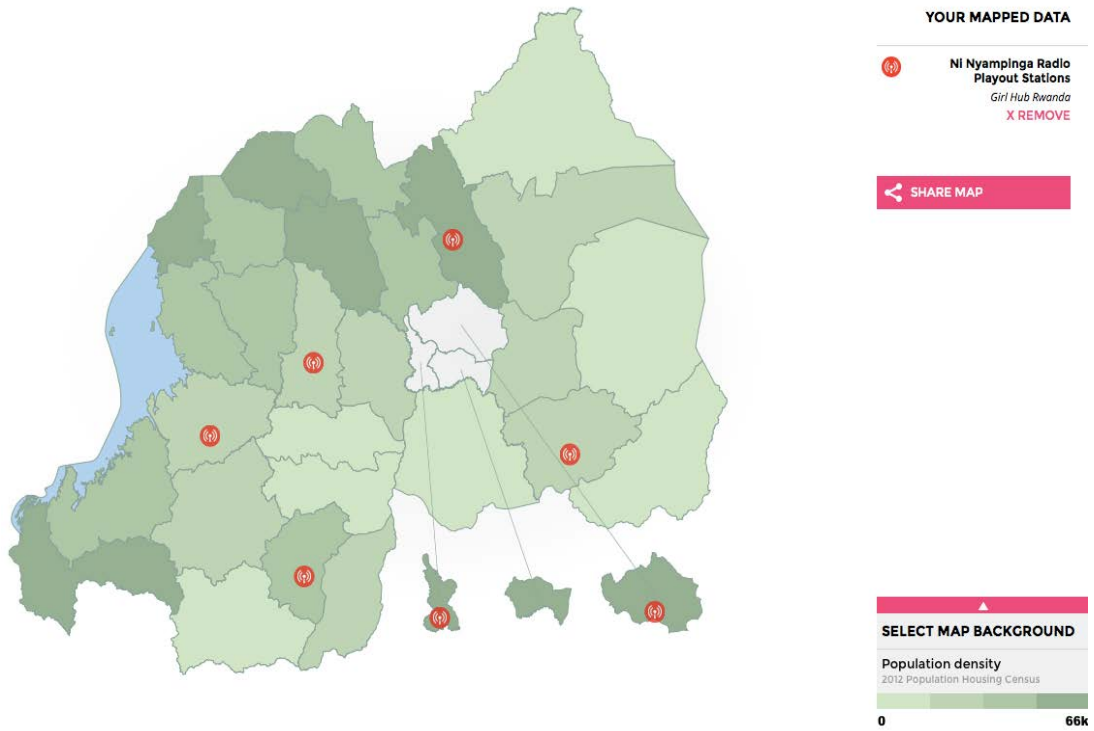
A lack of sufficient nutrition in pregnant teenagers combined with the fact that the body has not developed and grown enough to accommodate childbearing can result in problems with breastfeeding. This is common among girls aged 12-14.

Dr Bahosho adds: "When the girl has delivered her baby but the epidural has not worn off yet, her parents can ask for her to be injected with contraception without thinking much about it. However, it is the girl's decision and it is best when she asks for it herself. If a girl has two unplanned

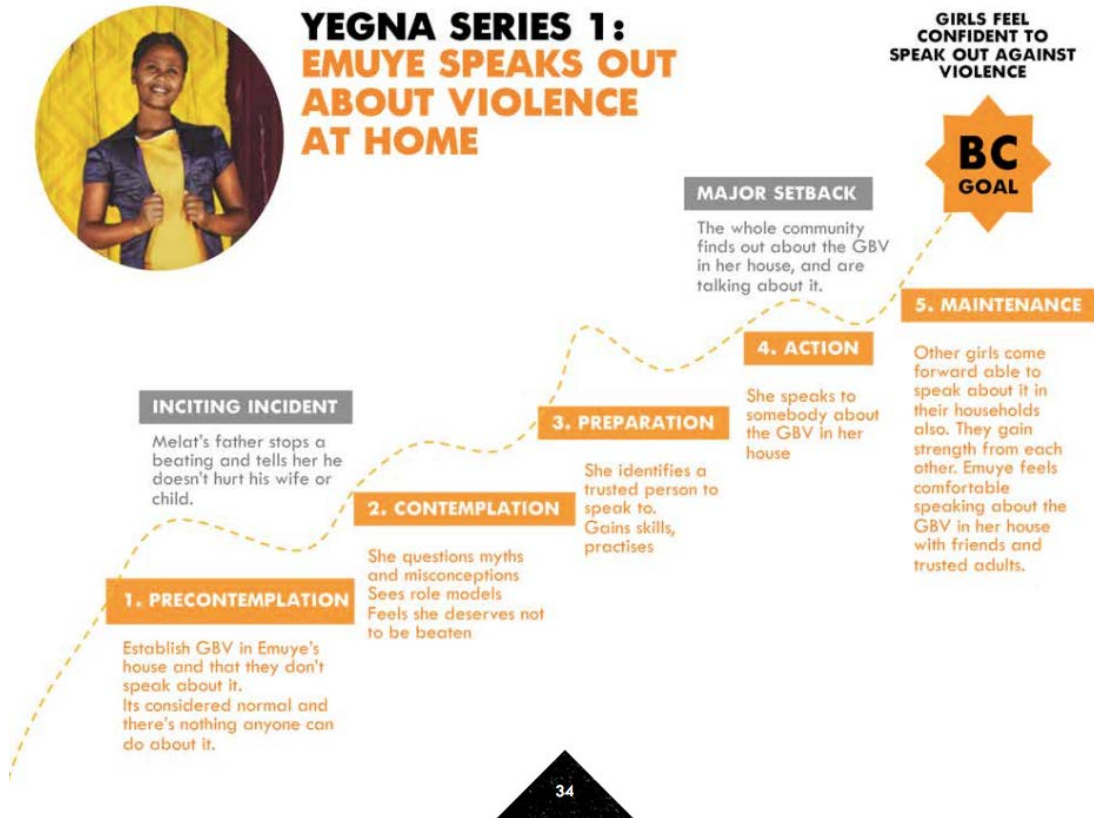
pregnancies, the doctors will generally advise her to consider contraception, but she is never coerced into doing it. Her right of choice is always respected."

Janine Othman Clarke, aged 16 and in SO, has suggested that girls who have never been in that situation should talk to girls who have so that they might gain a better understanding and treat them with more respect, as no one deserves to be shamed, no matter what.

## Appendix E:



## Appendix F:



## Appendix G:

*English translation of Abet:*

*Lemlem:* “Abet!” Say “Abet to me,” hear me—Abet—I have a message—Abet in this house!

*Mimi:* “Abet!” Say “Abet to me,” hear me—Abet—I have a message—Abet in this house!

*Melat:* “Abet!” Say “Abet to us,” hear us—Abet—We have a message—We have a message about us!

*Melat and girls:* Abet—Ezih bet! (Call and response: Hello! In this house!)

*Lemlem:*

She is as a sister and a mother

As a wife—we should not be silent or take her for granted.

While one woman holds three lives

With love, supporting each other

Working together with understanding

Let us be one and live in joy

Let’s not be separated. Adera!\*

\* Adera is a pleading and heavy word to “promise/take care”

*Mimi and girls:* Let’s not be separated. Adera!

*Melat:*

Oh—let’s go out—Yay!—with our heads high

Oh—let’s show them—Ah!—that we can!

Let’s show our talent, capacity, and our wisdom

Let the world be amazed—let’s come together

Let us live together in love

People, let’s not be separated. Adera!

*Mimi and girls:* Let’s not be separated. Adera!

*Melat and girls:* Abet—Ezih bet! (Call and response: Hello! In this house!)

*Mimi:*

Who you underestimate/look down upon will will one day

leave you naked

Advise him and wake him up and advise him

Let him respect me—let me respect him—Let’s not look down on each other

Whenever, wherever, love shall win! Wa!\*

\*Wa! is a warning.

*feat. Haile Roots:*

Why should I lose her and be sad and hurt  
While she has been by my side, my support in this world?  
I don't want to see her down and depressed because  
she can't find someone to support her

While I could be there by her side to support her  
I have passed her by so many times pretending like I can't see her [her needs]  
But now it's enough—let me stand by her side  
For the world is not complete without her  
Why should I lose her and be sad and hurt  
While she has been by my side, my support in this world?

*Mimi:*

We have stood up! We have decided! See us—here—we have come!

*Melat:*

We've had enough of the past! We are rising today!

*Mimi:*

We have been looked down upon in the past  
People have underestimated, undermined us  
What we have had to endure—we do not like  
We have risen today, we have decided  
We carry love, skill, and hope in our hands!

Abet—Ezih bet! (Call and response: Hello! In this house!)

*Haile Roots:*

Why should I lose her and be sad and hurt  
While she has been by my side, my support in this world?

## Appendix H:



**Guatemala research sample:** the sample was selected according to the different levels of impact the program aims to measure. The following table gives detail of the reasons behind the selection, prepared by Angel Del Valle, M&E Coordinator for Population Council Guatemala.

Stakeholder	When they participated	Reason for selection
Girls (participants in clubs)	Stage 1: Girl clubs in El Llano and Panimatزالam PTA1: Girl club in Valparaiso Stage 2: Girl clubs from Rio Frio and Chuinimachicaj	Through the weekly sessions, girls build their personal assets (knowledge, skills, resources and opportunities) and strengthen their peer-to-peer connections. Impact of the program at the individual level must be measured and demonstrated in order to inform other components of the program, such as the curriculum and the strategies for knowledge transmission.
Girl leaders (adolescents leading clubs)	PTA 1: Solola region	Girl leaders, interns and mentors have an important role in the AO model because of their knowledge transmission skills and their power of influence over institutions, communities, families and other relationships. They are the ones in charge of identifying girl's demands and their voice is crucial in the advocacy mechanisms AO aims to build around clubs. A holistic understanding of the interactions between the different leadership levels is necessary to reach girls in the clubs in an effective way. For this reason, it was necessary for girl leaders, interns and mentors to be engaged in PV MSC collection and selection at different stages.
Interns (adolescents leading clubs and engaging in internships)	PTA 1: Solola region	
Mentors (interns who have graduated to become mentors, integrated as staff members)	Stage 2	
Community leaders (key stakeholders and decision-makers)	Stage 1: El Llano and Panimatزالam communities. Stage 2: Chuinimachicaj community.	Community leaders are key allies of the AO program. The COCODEs (local authorities) are the stakeholders who contribute by consolidating agreements in which the community directly contributes to the establishment and running of local girls' clubs. Parents, especially mothers, must be engaged in program activities in order to support and maintain girls' participation.
Girl's parents (parents of the girls participating in clubs)	Stage 1: El Llano and Panimatزالam communities. Stage 2: Chuinimachicaj community.	



## Appendix I:

Identification of domains + selection of MSC stories

Organising MSC stories

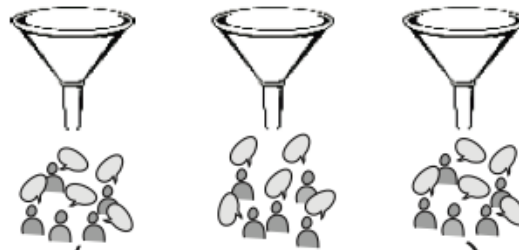


Stories are watched and verified. Any stories found to be un-truthful are eliminated at this stage.

Tagging

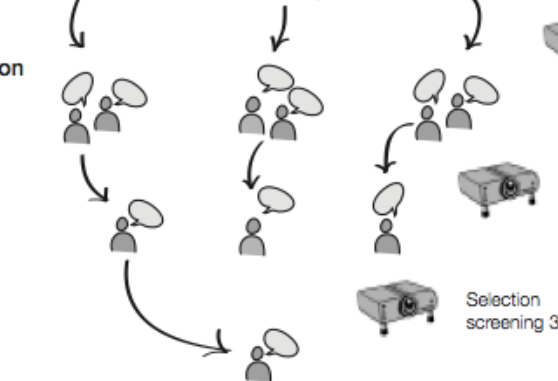
All stories are tagged with keywords. These words are then used to sort the individual testimonies into domains of change.

Sorting into domains



Once the domains have been determined, videos are screened to various audiences who select the stories most significant to them within each domain.

Screening and MSC \*selection



Selection Screening 1

Selection screening 2

Selection screening 3

Audience discussions around which story is most significant are recorded through scribe notes or using video.

## Appendix J:

### Quality of Output

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
<p><b>What has been the feedback on the films which participants consented to show to external audiences?</b></p>	<p>Written quotes from video interviews after screening (group and individual interviews), gathered with flip cameras when possible</p>	<p>The nature of the quotes, positive or negative, will determine whether we have been successful.</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>            Quote from Guatemala Coordinator:            "We received positive reactions from the different audiences who watched the films. At the partner level, reactions stressed the importance of investing in capacity building processes at the girl level. At the community level the reaction was beyond expected, particularly for community leaders, who emphasised the importance of discussing topics such as violence and sexual reproductive health."             National screenings:            The films have been screened in 8 national events.             "This was an event that gathered program experts from Latin and Central America. The goal was to advocate for the inclusion of vulnerable girls in the local strategies of the different organisations participating in the workshop. The audience was deeply engaged with the speech provided by Ingrid and Hilda. An indigenous leader from Guatemala was very emotional and cried as she congratulated PV girl leaders saying: "I'm really proud to see indigenous girls participating in this initiative; this is a breakthrough for all indigenous women in Guatemala". Guatemala Coordinator. (Screening Strategic planning for girls and adolescents workshop coordinated by UNFPA Guatemala and Population Council Guatemala)             Local screenings:            All the participants highlighted the importance of discussing these topics in groups and listening to girls' stories. They valued being provided with a space for learning and also acquiring new skills and in particular connecting with others.</p>		
<p><b>Are the films usable outside their original context?</b></p>	<p>Reactions from PV Plus and national screenings (report from partners using the films in international screenings). Monitoring the comment stream from posting the films online.</p>	<p>The films have been used nationally at least 4 -5 times, and at international conferences, hopefully at Stage 4. The films are getting responses online (positive or constructive will be interesting since it means they're striking debate) from being viewed by online audience.</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>            Quote from Guatemala Coordinator:             "A couple of films were screened at a girl-centered capacity building workshop held in Antigua Guatemala in October 2011 - the workshop was coordinated and facilitated by the staff of Population Council Guatemala. This workshop was attended by 30 staff members from partner organisations of the UN Interagency System in different Latin American Countries. The focus of the screening was innovation in M&amp;E and participatory evaluations. Two girl leaders from the PV+M&amp;E Initiative directed the screening and the reaction from the audience was very diverse: from the importance of investing in technology to improve M&amp;E results, to the need of including "beneficiaries" in evaluations."</p>		



Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
Can an outside audience understand the message and lessons learned?	Reactions from PV Plus screenings nationally and internationally, (group and individual interviews)	The content of the quotes and the level of debate after each film will determine the depth of understanding of the audience. If there is debate, normally it is because the audience understood the content, whether it agrees or disagrees with the message of the film.

**Reported Results:**

Quote from Guatemala Coordinator:

"Two of the PV Plus videos were screened with different audiences: one with the board of Vital Voices Guatemala and one with the Guatemala Rotary Club. In both cases the attention was directed to the lifestyle of indigenous girls, and few comments were made regarding the technique of participatory video. In my opinion, this shows that the PV Plus videos are able to transmit the depth of the program and the lessons learned through the participatory evaluation."

Are the films interesting to watch, do they inspire wider conversation?	Reactions from screenings, quotes, posts on websites, youtube stats,	The content of the quotes and the level of debate after each film will determine the depth of understanding of the audience. If there is debate, normally it is because the audience understood the content, whether it agrees or disagrees with the message of the film.
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**Reported Results:**

Quote from Guatemala Coordinator:

"One of the PV Plus videos was screened at the Grassroots Girls Initiative Convention in Istanbul, where a number of representatives from different girl-centered organisations took part in a conversation after the screening. There was a lot of interest in the technique, but doubts and comments were directed to the basic components of the Abriendo Oportunidades program. This showed that the videos inspired wider conversations beyond the stories and testimonies documented."

## Innovation and Training

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
Are the participatory video trainees developing new ways to use their skills?	Video diaries, Mood Spectrum, Observation, Interviews, PLA exercises with girls during workshop	Compare to baseline (original level of skill at Stage 1) the skills they are left with by end of Stage 3. Testing specific skills like: Computer editing / Filming / Equipment maintenance / Teaching others

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
<p><b>Reported Results:</b> Group in Guatemala is now using their skills in diverse program activities: girl club level, research, participatory video activities.</p> <p>Skills testing:</p> <p>The trainees achieved on average over 90% in 5 out of 6 skills, all those which had been learnt and practiced through out a longer period of time (Stage 1, PTA1 and Stage 2). The completely new skill incorporated in Stage 2, internet, was the one with lower average percentage:</p> <p>Shooting video: Average of 97% Editing: Average of 90% Facilitation: Average of 91% Internet: Average of 61% Teaching video: Average of 94% Teamwork: Average of 92%</p>		
<p><b>Are the partners and girl trainees using new technologies and new communication pathways?</b></p>	<p>Videos diaries, Interviews, PLA</p>	<p>Monitor which communications channels the girls are using, the frequency and reason for using these various channels</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b> The trainees are now using the Internet, including platforms like Facebook, Vimeo, YouTube, etc. They are also using camcorders, photo cameras, microphones, and all of the kit provided for them. Quote from Guatemala Coordinator: "We have incorporated participatory video production linked to issues like violence, sport and economic and productive activities".</p>		
<p><b>Have there been places or occasions that the films were screened when it wasn't planned?</b></p>	<p>Partner feedback, info from dissemination strategy (follow up call by IS prior to final report)</p>	<p>The films have been screened 3 or 4 times in unplanned locations. Record screening dates, locations, numbers of people and type of audience.</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b> As reported by the Guatemala Coordinator, the films have been screened in 8 events during and after the initiative: Strategic planning for girls and adolescents workshop (coordinated by UNFPA Guatemala and Population Council Guatemala) October 2011 Rotary Club Guatemala monthly meeting. March 2012 Vital Voices Guatemala. March 2012 Tengo algo que dar fair. June 2012. AO girl leaders: interns, girl leaders and mentors . June 2012 PCG Staff and Karin Mattson, program officer at the Mexico Headquarters of UNWomen.</p>		
<p><b>Has the participatory video process enabled a change in the way that the local programs are perceived by Partners, has there been any shifts in implementation and strategy informed by the initiative?</b></p>	<p>Final screening with partner (BRAC or PCG), info recorded on video or audio.</p>	<p>- -NGO staff make statements that highlights a change in their perspective.- Actual changes to the way programs are run.- Screening may also confirm that the partners are on the right track already, we will confirm this also with quotes and interviews with key staff</p>

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
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**Reported Results:**

The Coordinators agreed that the participatory evaluation provided the main indicators of change that will be used in the future monitoring of programming, emphasising that really diverse communities highlighted similar concepts. "These results provide us with the main indicators for AO" (Alejandra Colom, Program Coordinator)

Population Council Guatemala is planning to go a step further in the near future using the results of this participatory evaluation to:

Program delivery: Guide changes in program delivery in the new year cycle of AO for e.g.. Adapt the duration of trainings and facilitation style

Curricula: Incorporate the videos in the review of AO's guide for 13-17 year old girls to complete the "minimal doses" of programming for 6 months, a year and 2 years planning. The new revised curricula lead by the external consultant Cecilia Garces will be based on the results exposed in the videos.

Research and M&E: Use the results of this grounded theory process and take them a step further with Consensus Analysis, by Stephen Borgatti, and create mental maps of cultural concepts like girl empowerment. This will include free listing and triangulation of the tagging process.

<p><b>Have the trainees developed new or modified any exercises or processes to interface with the community?</b></p>	<p>Review with trainees and partner interviews, facilitator observations,</p>	<p>- The girls integrate the games and make changes to the way that the clubs are run. We will track the various games and exercises we are using and report on the changes made in the way that they are implemented in the field.</p>
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**Reported Results:**

Trainees' new tools

Games and exercises trainees have already used in girl groups:

Relay race with full buckets of water / The old caretaker game (3) / The dance of the palm tree / Goalkeeper

Games and exercises trainees aim to use in girl groups:

The mosquito (2) / Cat and mouse (3) / Moving opposites

Participatory video techniques trainees aim to use in girl groups:

VIPP cards / Dramatizing / Teaching girls to film / Appearing and disappearing game / The name game / Projecting videos

Trainees are taking their skills one step further and building on what they have learned, for example: Gavi is now doing an internship assisting a researcher and Irma and Ingrid have been leading participatory video projects in different communities. (Guatemala Coordinator)

**Participation**

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
<p><b>Are there any negative observations or public statements about the programs? What are they?</b></p>	<p>MSC scribe notes and stories</p>	<p>People involved with the MSC process were comfortable enough to share negative stories. Record the number of negative MSC stories captured.</p>



Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>  Yes, trainees have discussed ways of improving the leadership cascading system and strengthen transitioning periods when a girl leader leaves the girl club and a new girl leader is appointed. Their recommendations have been included in a Paper Animation presenting the results of the evaluation created by them in Stage 4. Quote from the Paper Animation: "Establish good relationships between outgoing girl leader and incoming girl leader in each community, so the new girl leader feels supported and the group doesn't disintegrate in the transition. Create meetings with the new girl leader, the mentor and local authorities. Support the new girl leader and provide her with a diverse training of techniques such as the ones learnt by the participatory video girl leaders."</p>		
<p><b>What is the difference between the planned and actual delivery, objectives, intentions, outcomes. Why is there a difference? This would reflect the reality of implementation, which is never perfect!</b></p>	<p>MSC scribe notes and stories, trainees ask directly at partner screening Stage 3.</p>	<p>Compare the deliverables in the proposal with the results from the implementation.</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>  This is covered in the 'Adapting the Methodology' sections of this report and Successes and Challenges section. Also see the relevant report for more details; Some of the changes related to adapting the methodology to the specific context (Stage 1 report) the others relate to the logistics around getting the trainees to the communities (Stages 2 and 3 reports). To accommodate this, in Stage 1 we shifted to use grounded theory. In Stages 2 and 3 we brought beneficiaries from diverse locations to Antigua to participate in the activities.</p>		
<p><b>Have the trainees and participants felt free to offer constructive criticism to the donor, the local partner or other decision makers in the programs circle of influence?</b></p>	<p>Talking circle - Review in Stage 3 and 4 with partners and trainees, record questions asked</p>	<p>- Negative and constructive feedback is gathered</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>  The trainees were completely free to discuss and share their opinions about the program with the staff in the organisation. They have recorded their questions and the answers provided by staff. Quote from Guatemala trainee: "I feel happy because they are thinking about creating new A.O. groups and listening to more girls which is really important". Trainees were also able to present their recommendations on good girl programming to the donor during Stage 4.</p>		
<p><b>Has the local partner organisation been open to listening and are they willing to take action, at what level within the organisation has this need for change penetrated?</b></p>	<p>Discussion with partners and trainees + follow up call at the end of project with HQ of partners (online questionnaire)</p>	<p>- After identification of areas of improvement, action for change is planned</p>
<p><b>Reported Results:</b>  Quote from Guatemala Coordinator:   "The PV+M&amp;E initiative made a concrete impact within the organisation. At the local level MSC and PV were fully integrated to the M&amp;E strategy for 2013-2014 cycle. Plus, an MSC selection was planned to complement household surveys for the current cycle. At the global office level, the experience was documented in the new edition of the toolkit "Investing when it Counts" a valuable contribution of the Council to girl programming worldwide."</p>		

## Sustainability

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
<b>Are girls motivated to continue to use participatory video and their new skills beyond the initiative?</b>	Video diaries, PLA, reflection on baseline	- Girls are enrolled into continued monitoring program of organisation- Organisations integrate tools and methodologies from initiative into their practice

### Reported Results:

Quote from Guatemala Coordinator: "The Council is planning to incorporate PV MSC in the M&E strategy cycle for 2013-2014 which will include planning the activities with the trainees. This year they have been involved in producing participatory videos related to violence, sports, productive and economic activities."

Quotes from trainees in Stage 3:

"I'm going to keep using my new abilities in participatory video to edit, participate and share my opinions more"

"Everything that I've learnt in this workshop I can use it"

<b>Are the trainees planning to teach others to film and facilitate participatory video?</b>	Video diaries, PLA, reflection on baseline and assignments	- Trainees facilitate processes as trainers
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### Reported Results:

The trainees have mainly mentioned that they will share their new skills inside the program, in the girl clubs, and with people in their communities, as well as with diverse institutions (like NGO partners, schools and the local church). They also emphasise passing on their skills to their peers: other girl leaders and interns in the program.

Quote from trainee, Stage 3: "I'm planning to teach how to film and use participatory video to the new girl leaders, interns and girls from the AO program"

Participatory videos created after Stage 3 (information provided by the Guatemala Coordinator):

Visual baseline: Economic project in Los Tuices, Totonicapan.

Participatory video on the activity "Jardin de lantanas", Aidea Vasquez, Totonicapan.

Visual baseline: Rugby activity.

Participatory video Paper Animation about types of violence in Telena, Quetzaltenango.

Participatory video reflecting on the AO program

Participatory video on types of violence, Cerro de Oro, Santiago Atitlan.

Participatory video about violence in Valparaiso, Alta Verapaz.

Participatory video about violence in Chiriquiaq, Quetzaltenango.

<b>How confident are the trainees and trainers that the girl participants are adequately equipped to be able to facilitate participatory video aligned to best practice standards.</b>	Discussion and evaluation - peer to peer in Stage 4	- Consent procedures are followed- Workshops are organised to meet community needs and
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### Reported Results:

During Stage 3, trainees created consent procedures, guidelines to use equipment, discussed how to work in small groups, and planned an event to prepare themselves for the future.

## Diffusion and Dissemination

Question	Method of analysis	Indicator of success
Is there a continuous stream of media production planned for and being shared with various audiences?	Discussion with trainees and partners, Stage 2 post-training assignments	Number of films shared (5)Number of screenings (5)Diversity of audiences (3)

### Reported Results:

See the [website](#). Also see previous table with list of participatory videos created post Stage 3.

Is there sustained discussion and contributions on the established social networks and the learning platform?	Data collection from discussion with partners and girls, analysis of platforms being created, the traffic volume, use of emails, google groups, number of local screenings, Stage 2 post-training assignments	Number of posts on FB by the girls (20)Local screenings (5)
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### Reported Results:

Trainees have been in touch regularly with trainers after Stage 3 and 4 via facebook chat, which shows how they have incorporated the network.

All the trainees have screened videos in between Stages to diverse local audiences: parents, girl clubs, schools, churches, local indigenous government.

Do the girls plan to make use of the films to make their case for girls with the big systems players - such as DFID, the World Bank, and other implementing organisations?	Results from PLA tools and dissemination strategy	1 screening per country to large system players
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### Reported Results:

The films were screened to a high level audience at AWID in Turkey with great reception. The films will also be accessible online to all of these system players.

Also as indicated above, the trainees have presented their films in these events at country level:

Strategic planning for girls and adolescents workshop (coordinated by UNFPA Guatemala and Population Council Guatemala) October 2011

Rotary Club Guatemala monthly meeting. March 2012

Vital Voices Guatemala. March 2012

Tengo algo que dar fair. June 2012.

AO girl leaders: interns, girl leaders and mentors. June 2012

PCG Staff and Karin Mattson, program officer at the Mexico Headquarters of UNWomen.

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