



Thematic Session
Generation Equality: Girls and adolescents' participation in building a more equal world.

Concept Note
March 29th, 2021
13:00 – 14:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)
22:00 – 23:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)

Background

2020 was supposed to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity for women and girls. The year when governments, businesses, organizations, and individuals who believe in equal treatment for all people were going to develop a five-year plan for how to work together to accelerate progress for gender equality, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Then the Covid-19 pandemic struck and 2020 posed possible irreversible setbacks and lost progress for girls and adolescents. Unless the world acts fast and decisively, the impact on girls' and adolescents' futures- and on all our futures- will be devastating.

In the context of the pandemic, many challenges had surfaced, especially regarding groups who are often left behind, such as children, women, Indigenous people, elderly, and those living under poverty. For girls, this scenario has raised issues in the private and public life; facing domestic violence from caregivers or parents, unwanted pregnancies due to sexual abuse, unpaid work and responsibilities in their households, impossibility to resume their studies due to the lack of technological resources, and the increase of vulnerabilities regarding forced labour and sexual violence.

There is an unacceptably elevated level of new HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infections and low levels of HIV knowledge among adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, services related to the prevention and response to gender-based violence have been limited due to the mobility restrictions in the pandemic,¹ and have limited access to sexual and reproductive health services,

¹ UNICEF, COVID-19 - GBV Risks to Adolescent Girls and Interventions to Protect and Empower them. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/68706/file/COVID-19-GBV-risks-to-adolescent-girls-and-interventions-to-protect-them-2020.pdf>



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including HIV prevention, treatment, and care. In addition, public space has also increased the risk due to the reduction of people on the streets and public transportation, enabling a much more insecure context for girls and women.

A report highlighting the challenges faced by girls in 14 countries in the COVID-19 context found that girls have a differentiated impact than boys in their mental health, in the increase of domestic responsibilities and been more likely to drop out of school than boys.²

As previously mentioned, the effects of COVID-19 have deeply affected girls' rights and possibilities to achieve a higher standard of life. The Internet has become not only a new form of socialization but also an important way of exercising their right to education and access to economic resources. Data shows that girls are also left behind in this topic, for instance, men and boys use more internet than women and girls in all regions of the world.³ It has been identified that boys are 1.5 times more likely to own a phone than girls, and 1.8 times more likely to own a smartphone in middle and low-income countries.⁴ These statistics are from before the COVID crisis, so we can only expect that they have risen over the last year.

In this context, the Generation Equality Forum is more relevant than ever. We all need not only comprehensive intergenerational and intersectional dialogue to establish clear goals and commitments to reach equality in every aspect of life for women, girls, and adolescents around the world, but also start building young feminist leadership and movements to prepare this generation for the change in the world we want to see and create.

The strengthening of feminist leadership and movement would help to build a real impact on gender equality and girls' and women's human rights, respecting and addressing their needs. As stated by UN Women, "investing in young women's leadership will not only change the trajectory of their future, but that of their communities as well."⁵ That is why this should be mainstreamed through all the six

² Plan International, *Halting lives: The impact of COVID-19 on girls and young women*, p. 11. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/final-draft-covid19-halting-lives_070920.pdf

³ "Working Group on the Digital Divide. Recommendations for action: bridging gender gap in Internet and broadband access and use." The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, March 2017, p.8 <https://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/publications/WorkingGroupDigitalGenderDivide-report2017.pdf>

⁴ "COVID-19: The Impact on Girls." Plan International, 2020, <https://planinternational.org/publications/covid-19-impact-girls>

⁵ UN Women, Strengthening young women's leadership. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/youth/strengthening-young-women-leadership>



action coalitions and the women, peace, and security global compact to guarantee the inclusion of adolescents and girls in every action.

To make it truly comprehensive, the agenda and public discussions must consider the specific vulnerabilities that girls and adolescents face, as well as their importance as agents of change. By amplifying girls and young women voices to be the changemakers and designers of the solutions to their challenges and opportunities, we will unleash a powerful force that will bring lasting change.

Moreover, it must ensure that their voices, perceptions and ideas are included in the analysis and the designing of schemes and goals that will lead to create a post COVID-19 world, more just and equal for all women, adolescents, and girls. Ignoring what they have to say can lead to an incomplete understanding of their situation and the way we must seek progress, leaving one especially important part of the population behind. This is a crucial topic that should be mainstreamed through all the Action Coalitions, giving a priority to future generations for a systemic change to occur.

General Objective

As a global public conversation for urgent action and accountability for gender equality, the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico promotes systemic, transformative change that accelerates the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) and leads to gender equality, resilience, and sustainability in a world affected by COVID-19.

Specific Objectives

- Intergenerational and intersectional balanced representation.
- Strengthening the girls and women's movement and civil society activism.
- Promote high-level political commitment and action.
- Raise awareness of the urgent need to invest in gender equality and the imperative of an intersectional and intergenerational gender equality agenda.
- Galvanize civil society and youth in promoting commitments.
- Contribute ideas to strengthen gender justice and youth movements.
- Highlight the impact of COVID-19 on women's and girl's rights.
- Include the COVID-19 differentiated impact in the specific thematic area.



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- Identify innovative solutions and practices. The discussion will be an opportunity to learn from the gender-responsive practices that women's, youth and adolescents' organizations and solidarity networks are implementing in the COVID-19 response and recovery context.

Participants

- 2 representatives of girls' groups,
- 6 representatives of adolescents' groups,
- 2 representatives of youth groups,
- 2 adults (from academia, government, NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations), or private sector) that were activists in their childhood or adolescence.

Format

This virtual dialogue will be held on March 29 from 13:00 – 14:30 am (MEX time). The discussion will be driven by an experienced feminist moderator who will direct the conversation between nine different stakeholders and the audience to ensure a diversity of views. The audience will be able to interact by using the chat on the platform. Simultaneous interpretation will be available.



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Suggested time	Proposed activity
13:00 – 13:05 22:00 – 22:05	Welcome remarks.
13:05 – 13:45 22:05 – 22:4	<p>Moderated discussion with the panelists. Participants have between 3-4 minutes to answer each question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What changes, experiences can you imagine doing a global transformation for change? 2. What opportunities, obstacles and frustrations have you found in your path and how to make meaningful connections out of these opportunities? 3. How to forge strong alliances with other partners and stakeholders to build a better future for girls and adolescents? 4. What would be your recommendations to mainstream the importance of including adolescent and girls' issues in all the action coalitions blueprints?
13:45 – 14:15 22:45 – 23:15	Q&A session. The Moderator reads selected questions from the chat.
14:15 – 14:20 23:15 – 23:20	Closing: moderator thanks participants and audience.