



Child & Youth  
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CYFI Network Brief 2

**Why Girls Matter?**  
**Integrated Programs for the Economic  
Empowerment of Adolescent Girls**

By I. Diaz Soto, K. Paik, & F. Knoote

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## Why Girls Matter? Integrated Programs for the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

By Irene Diaz Soto<sup>1</sup>, Floor Knoote<sup>2</sup> & Kathryn Paik<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Women's economic empowerment has recently been given priority on different international development agendas, such as in the post 2015 framework<sup>4</sup>, and gender equality in access to primary schooling has been achieved in most countries worldwide. Still, there are 68 nations where disparity remains significant<sup>5</sup>, especially in areas like access to education, livelihood and economic opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

Regulation and policy have not always reflected the importance of investing in adolescent girls as a specific target group.<sup>7</sup> Most national and global initiatives target "gender" as a holistic concept with no consideration of age, developmental stage, vulnerability or psychological and emotional needs.<sup>8</sup> However, restrictions on access to social and financial resources are still more limiting for girls than for boys<sup>9</sup> and most regulations and policies do not address specific provisions for young girls between the

ages of 10 and 19.<sup>10</sup> Adolescence is not only a crucial stage in rapid social, physical, and emotional development but one critical transition to adulthood and independency. Furthermore, failure to meet any developmental needs during this critical phase can have serious short- and long-term negative consequences.<sup>11</sup> In line with this, UNICEF and Population Council outline in their Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index (AGVI), that "while all adolescents—boys and girls between 10 and 19—should be entitled to a decent livelihood, girls face disproportionate risks"<sup>12</sup> and distinctive consequences from their unique vulnerabilities that play a crucial role in continuing the intergenerational cycle of poverty. In addition, multiple studies indicate that girls are more likely to find themselves in poverty with significantly fewer opportunities for future recovery: Over 250 million adolescent girls live in poverty with limited access to education and health services and persistent exposure to discrimination and violence;<sup>13</sup> Pregnancy and childbirth-related complications are also leading causes of not only vulnerability but also death for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide;<sup>14</sup> and last, the mortality rate and frequency of abuse is greater among adolescent girls than boys.<sup>15</sup>

Policy and program interventions must address the financial and social needs of girls during this critical stage of life in order to prevent any future conditions of vulnerability.<sup>16</sup> With the appropriate tools and incentives girls can stay healthy and safe and create better futures for themselves and their families. This paper provides an overview of the existing evidence on adolescent girls and economic empowerment, outcomes of adolescent girl interventions as well as a set of policy recommendations for the successful implementation of such interventions.

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<sup>4</sup> Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J., (2013). "Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post - 2015 Framework". "The Gender and Development Network (GADN) (January 31, 2013). Accessed March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.post2015women.com/publication/achieving-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-in-the-post-2015-framework/>

<sup>5</sup> OECD. (2013) "Gender Equality And Women's Rights In The Post-2015 Agenda: A Foundation For Sustainable Development." <http://www.oecd.org/dac/POST-2015%20Gender.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Morrison, A. and Sabarwal, S. (2008). "The Economic Participation of Adolescent Girls and Young Women: Why Does It Matter?" The Washington DC, The World Bank/ The Adolescent Girls Initiative. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/PolicyNoteRevised.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF. (2006). "Advocacy Tools and Arguments For Social Investment In Adolescents." UNICEF, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama. Accessed March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: [http://www.unicef.org/lac/INVERSION\\_EN\\_ADOLESCENTES-eng%285%29.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lac/INVERSION_EN_ADOLESCENTES-eng%285%29.pdf)

Accessed February the 25<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>8</sup> Amin, S., Austrian, A., Chau, M., Glazer, K., Green, E., Stewart, D., & Stoner, M. (2013). "Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index: Guiding Strategic Investment in Uganda". New York: Population Council.

[http://www.unicef.org/uganda/PGY.AGI\\_Uganda\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/uganda/PGY.AGI_Uganda_2013.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Morrison, A. and Sabarwal, S. (2008). "The Economic Participation of Adolescent Girls and Young Women: Why Does It Matter?". Washington DC, The World Bank/ The Adolescent Girls Initiative.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/PolicyNoteRevised.pdf> Accessed February the 25<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF (2011). "State of the World's Children 2011: Adolescence –an age of opportunity". New York. <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/>

<sup>11</sup> Hempel, K., Wuermli, A., Lundberg M. (2012) "Adolescence Protecting and Promoting Human Development in Times of Economic Shocks" Policy Note, Number 13

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/280558-1334441996287/SPL\\_Policy\\_Note\\_13.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/280558-1334441996287/SPL_Policy_Note_13.pdf) P. 1

<sup>12</sup> Amin, S., Austrian, A., Chau, M., Glazer, K., Green, E., Stewart, D., & Stoner, M. (2013). "Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index: Guiding Strategic Investment in Uganda." Population Council, UNICEF, The Republic of Uganda Of the global population of adolescent girls, estimated at 582.3 million, 239.3 million (41%) of these are thought to be living in poverty.

[http://www.unicef.org/lac/boys\\_and\\_girls\\_life\\_cycle.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lac/boys_and_girls_life_cycle.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Hartl, M. (2006) "Reducing Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Poor Rural Areas." United Nations.

<sup>15</sup> Amin, S., Austrian, A., Chau, M., Glazer, K., Green, E., Stewart, D., & Stoner, M. (2013). "Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index: Guiding Strategic Investment in Uganda." Population Council.

<sup>16</sup> Population Council (2005). "Building Assets for Safe, Productive Lives: A Report on a Workshop on Adolescent Girls Livelihood". Accessed March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: [www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/BuildingAssets\\_Oct05.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/BuildingAssets_Oct05.pdf)

## 2. Background and Conceptual Framework

### Why are girls more vulnerable?

Adolescent girls are among the most economically vulnerable groups—significantly more so than adult women, men, or adolescent boys. Across all socioeconomic groups, women live worldwide under the constant threat of gender based violence: physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse. Globally up to 50 percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under the age of 16.<sup>17</sup> And up to 1 in 5 girls under the age of 15 experience sexual abuse worldwide.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Population Reference Bureau in their World's Youth Data Sheet (2013) states that nearly 10 percent of adolescent girls give birth each year in emerging countries, compared to less than 2 percent in developed countries.<sup>19</sup> These are not only some of the most prominent vulnerable conditions among young girls but the root for major causes of poverty. Once adolescent girls fall into the cycle of poverty, they encounter significantly less opportunities to overcome these conditions compared to other demographic groups—especially if their circumstances include early childbirth, early marriage, exposure to infectious and sexual transmitted diseases, or other vulnerable circumstances. Furthermore, economic vulnerability is considered the leading condition causing young girls to exchange sex for money or goods or to experience coerced or unprotected sex.<sup>20</sup> Recent studies show that the economic participation of young women can have a profound impact on their choices as well. For example, economically active girls and young women are more likely to postpone marriage and child bearing which leads to better socio-economic and health circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

### How Economic Opportunities make a Difference for Girls and their Communities

Evidence shows that providing girls with economic opportunities and the means to build financial assets can improve their health-seeking behavior, reduce their risk of violence, and delay their onset of sexual activity.<sup>22</sup> Formal financial education combined with social and livelihood

interventions is one way to address the issue. Financial inclusion and education is essential to help adolescent girls build a sustainable economic future. According to report from Women's World Banking (WWB), financial education contributes to asset building and helps girls build an understanding of principles around good money management. It also promotes awareness of personal financial issues and choices, and develops knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to manage day to day expenses, prepare for life events, set financial goals and develop strategies to achieve them.<sup>23</sup> However, formal financial education alone may not solve the problem. The report noted differences in setting and context but concluded that combining programs with some form of social or life skills education has shown to generate awareness of consequences of financial decisions and access to employment.

While most regulation and interventions address the need for access to formal education for all girls as an approach to end poverty, UNESCO reports that there are still 31 million girls of primary school age out of school and two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female.<sup>24</sup> Most of these girls will never return to school once they take on more traditional societal roles. While one customary approach to overcoming this situation is to prevent early marriage and childbirth during adolescence, this is not always possible when addressing more vulnerable and traditional communities. Experts on the subject like UNESCO and UNDP agree that now is a critical moment to understand the long-term impact of traditional education and to test new, innovative approaches to both formal and informal education that can give young girls access to more economic opportunities and employment.<sup>25</sup> Multidimensional, integrated and alternative programs need to be adapted to the specific situations and cultural reality of young girls, to address their needs, and ultimately to empower them to earn a living for themselves and their families.

Girls can be a powerful economic and societal force. According to different reports from UNESCO on the status of children and young women, every dollar spent on reducing malnutrition can result in a return of up to \$30 to the global economy.<sup>26</sup> And decreasing health inequality can increase a country's annual GDP growth rate. Investing in girls' education and livelihoods not only stimulates the

<sup>17</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF Year of the Youth (2011). "Fact Sheet: Girls and Young Women." Accessed March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/fact-sheet-girl-youngwomen.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> WHO (2005). "WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women: Initial Results on Prevalence, Health Outcomes and Women's Responses", p. 49. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/Introduction-Chapter1-Chapter2.pdf](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/Introduction-Chapter1-Chapter2.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Population Reference Bureau, (2013). "The World's Youth 2013 Data Sheet". Accessed March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.prb.org/pdf13/youth-data-sheet-2013.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Scorgie, F. (2012). "Socio-demographic characteristics and behavioral risk factors of female sex workers in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review." *AIDS Behav*, 16 (4), p. 920-933.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Morcos, C. and Sebstad, J. (2011) "Financial. Education for Adolescent Girls". Women's World Banking. Accessed March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: [http://www.womensworldbanking.org/PDFs/23\\_FinanEducationforAdolescentGirls.pdf](http://www.womensworldbanking.org/PDFs/23_FinanEducationforAdolescentGirls.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO (2013) "Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Fact Sheet." Accessed March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/images/2011/girls-factsheet-en.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> UNESCO (2014). "Investing in Girls' Empowerment for MDG Acceleration". NOT 15 EFA Global Monitoring (UNESCO Report 2013/14) <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/advocates/davos/pdf/Messages%20Formatted%20for%20Website%20Upload%20external.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO (2013). "Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Fact Sheet." Accessed March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/images/2011/girls-factsheet-en.pdf>

economy but also has the power to improve the lives of their families and communities. Furthermore, when we improve the lives of young girls we also improve the lives of their offspring. In Sub-Saharan Africa, between 13 percent (Nigeria) and 43 percent (South Africa) of children live in single-parent families.<sup>27</sup> UNESCO's 2013 Global Monitoring Report also states that a child whose mother can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past the age of five. The risk of maternal death decrease among women with more education. This is another piece of evidence that educated,<sup>28</sup> healthy young girls can have a profound positive impact on societies, economies and their future families.

### Conceptual Framework

CYFI poses that financial education, social education, livelihoods education and financial inclusion are the building blocks of empowerment and financial capability which in turn underpin economic citizenship for children and youth. The different concepts that are used in this model and throughout this publication are defined as such: First, CYFI defines a *child* as an individual under the age of 18, or under the age of majority as prescribed by national law, as defined by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;<sup>29</sup> *Youth* as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as defined by the United Nations;<sup>30</sup> and *Young people* as anyone between the ages of 10 and 24, as defined by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund.<sup>31</sup> *Adolescence*, moreover, is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF (2011) as any person between ages 10 and 19 and it is also considered the transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. This age range falls within WHO's definition of young people, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24.<sup>32</sup> However, when addressing the developmental stages, risk factors, vulnerability indicators and needs of young girls, the AGVI fragment this age in different subgroups: early adolescence (10-14) and later adolescence (15-19).<sup>33</sup>

*Financial education* includes instruction and/or materials designed to increase financial knowledge and skills. *Social education* is the provision of knowledge and skills that improve individuals' understanding and awareness of their

rights and the rights of others. It also involves fostering of life skills. *Livelihoods education* builds one's ability to secure a sustainable livelihood through skills assessment and a balance between developing entrepreneurial and employability skills. *Financial inclusion* is access to appropriate, quality, and affordable financial services. *Empowerment* is the sense of confidence and efficacy experienced by children and youth through controlling their own lives, claiming their rights, and having empathy toward others.<sup>34</sup>

For the purpose of this document, *financial capability* has both individual and structural components. It combines a person's ability to act with the opportunity to act. To be financially capable, people must have financial knowledge and skills as well as access to appropriate financial services to enhance social and economic well-being. While empowerment is portrayed as a separate construct in the CYFI model of economic citizenship, financial capability actually incorporates empowerment at the individual level and access and opportunity at the structural level. Essentially, financial capability occurs when young people are personally empowered and simultaneously experience financial inclusion, or real access to appropriate financial products and services along with the opportunity to practice using those services.<sup>35</sup>

## 3. Impacts of Integrated Education Approaches

### Combining Financial Education with Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion and education are essential to help adolescent girls build a sustainable economic future. According to reports from Women's World Banking, financial education "contributes to asset building and helps girls build an understanding of principles around good money management, promotes awareness of personal financial issues and choices, and develops knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to manage day to day expenses, prepare for life events, set financial goals and develop strategies to achieve them."<sup>36</sup> However, formal financial education alone may not solve the problem. Financial education is often more impactful when combined with other programs that improve the standard of living and build other capabilities for adolescent girls.

In line with this finding, as early as 1985, research has suggested that "Children develop financial and economic

<sup>27</sup> Scott, M.E., DeRose, L. Lippman, L.H. and Cook, E. (2013). World family map, Mapping family Change and Child Well-being out comes

<sup>28</sup> UNESCO, (2011). "Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Development Goals," [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001902/190214e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001902/190214e.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (September 2, 1990). The Convention on the Rights of the Child

<sup>30</sup> United Nations (1981). Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

<sup>31</sup> UNFPA (1999). Chapter Eight Reproductive Health of Young People. Defining Children and Young People. Available on: <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/manual/8.htm>

<sup>32</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) Recognizing Adolescent <http://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section2/page1/recognizing-adolescence.html>

<sup>33</sup> Amin, S., Austrian, A., Chau, M., Glazer, K., Green, E., Stewart, D., & Stoner, M. (2013) "Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index: Guiding Strategic Investment in Uganda." Population Council, UNICEF, The Republic of Uganda

<sup>34</sup> Sherraden, M.S. & Ansong, D. (2013). "Research Evidence on the CYFI Model of Children and Youth as Economic Citizens." CSD Research Report 13-04), p.6. Accessed March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015,,

[http://www.childfinanceinternational.org/index.php?option=com\\_mtree&task=att\\_download&link\\_id=1522&cf\\_id=200](http://www.childfinanceinternational.org/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=1522&cf_id=200),

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Morcos, C. & Sebstad, J. (2011). "Financial Education for Adolescent Girls." Women's World Banking.

understanding when they have ‘personal economic experiences’<sup>37</sup> as results show that children learn from observation, instruction, and practice. For example, Sherraden & Johnson propose that financial capability results when individuals develop financial knowledge and skills, but also gain access to financial instruments and institutions.<sup>38</sup> More recently, Whitebread and Bingham reviewed the literature on habit formation, to gain a deep understanding of habits that can impact financial capability later in life. They find that “by the age of seven years, several basic concepts relating broadly to later ‘finance’ behaviors will typically have developed.”<sup>39</sup> They go on to outline those behaviors and discuss counting, conservation, the ability to plan ahead and choice architecture. They conclude that the enjoyment of doing something with the parent, a familiar habit or the feeling of mastery in participating in “adult” activities, such as going to the bank, provides sufficient motive for young children, and interventions to introduce or change young children’s financial behaviors should take advantage of such motivations. This is also based on the generally accepted premise that children learn from observation, instruction, and practice.<sup>40</sup>

So far, integrated programs have generated positive results in the communities where they have been implemented. But further study of integrated programs is essential to determine which aspects are most complementary with financial education. Contextual circumstances likely play a large role in how effective and through what means programs and projects should be carried out. Programs suitable for one region or age group may not prove to be as beneficial for another. As stated by Women’s World Banking, “organizations that conduct thorough market research and adeptly incorporate findings into the design of the curricula will have the most promising financial education programs.”<sup>41</sup>

Carefully designed interventions that target girls’ economic empowerment *in tandem* with other programs can also positively impact their risk of specific forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Such interventions mitigate economic insecurity and improve decision-making by giving them increased access and control over assets and resources. Combined programming has also been shown to increase parents’ and brothers’ sense of girls’ competence and thus contributed to a positive shift in thinking about adolescent girls in general.<sup>42</sup> And although

not yet proven, it is suggested that girls’ economic empowerment can have a positive effect on shifting discriminatory gender norms – one of the key drivers of gender-based violence against women and girls.<sup>43</sup>

### Combining Financial and Social Education

Children and youth are considered both current and future social and economic actors and financial capability is not only a relevant 21st century life skill but also a great opportunity for creating a more skilled and knowledgeable future generation.<sup>44</sup> Adolescent girls often lack social support and social skills. Girls who learn how to gain financial independency combined with social and managerial knowledge are more prone to participate in the labor force and save their money for future benefit. Evaluation from different field related programs like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Population Council and Aflatoun also indicate that when an adolescent girl is involved in a program that combines social and financial education; her life and health improve considerably.<sup>45</sup>

A meta-analysis exploring the effectiveness of financial education aimed solely at children and youth additionally found that the best financial education program for changing financial attitudes was the Suubi Project that combined financial topics, health topics, and financial access with young single and double orphans in Uganda. The strongest program for changing financial behavior was the Aflatoun curriculum which combines social and financial topics and targets younger populations.<sup>46</sup> Across interventions those that combined financial education with another component, targeted young beneficiaries and had a shorter overall intervention were more effective at changing behavior.<sup>47</sup>

Aflatoun is thus one example of an organization that takes an integrated approach to financial education in formal settings. This program recognizes that creating a safe place for children requires them to address not only financial but also social topics.<sup>48</sup> They educate children about their rights and responsibilities while providing them with financial knowledge and the skills needed to implement it in their own environment.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Schug, M.C., and Birkey, C.J. (1985). “The development of children’s economic reasoning. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 13(1), 31-42; in Whitebread, D. & Bingham, S. (2013). “Habit Formation and Learning in Young Children”. The Money Advice Service, May 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Sherraden M.S. & Johnson, L. (2006). ‘From Financial Literacy to Financial Capability Among Youth.’ Working Paper 06-11. 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Whitebread, D. & Bingham, S. (2013). “Habit Formation and Learning in Young Children”. The Money Advice Service.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.16

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Marcus, R. (2014) “Gender Justice and Social Norms: Towards a conceptual framework.” Overseas Development Institute, UK.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> OECD and G20 (2013). “Advancing National Strategies for Financial Education: A Joint Publication by Russia’s G20 Presidency and the OECD”.

<sup>45</sup> Morcos, C. & Sebstad, J. (2011). “Financial Education for Adolescent Girls.” Women’s World Banking.

<sup>46</sup> Aflatoun Working Paper (2014), Financial Education for Children and Youth, [www.aflatoun.org/docs/default-source/aflatoun-secretariat-evaluation/financial-education-for-children-and-youth---systemic-review-and-meta-analysis-2014.pdf?sfvrsn=](http://www.aflatoun.org/docs/default-source/aflatoun-secretariat-evaluation/financial-education-for-children-and-youth---systemic-review-and-meta-analysis-2014.pdf?sfvrsn=)

<sup>47</sup> O Prey, L. & Shephard, D. (2014). “Financial Education for Children and Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.. Aflatoun Working Paper 2014-C.

<sup>48</sup> Morcos, C. & Sebstad, J. (2011) “Financial Education for Adolescent Girls.” Women’s World Banking.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 27

One criticism of financial programs is an inability to measure their effectiveness or to overcome the challenge of timing in terms of which topics to teach relative to a girl's stage in adolescence. Nevertheless, the different cases studies from the Women's World Banking report states that "market research will help to determine which topics are most appropriate at which points in time during adolescence because adolescence is a time of so many changes and transitions, therefore there are many teachable moments."<sup>50</sup> Population Council also addresses in several publications the need of combining social, health and economic assets in order to make a healthy transition into adulthood, "which in turn will reduce poverty. One kind of asset (i.e. knowledge of HIV and pregnancy) is not sufficient because often girls' economic situation trumps their knowledge of risky behavior."<sup>51</sup>

### Multidisciplinary Approaches, Health Care and Leadership Education

In integrated programs, financial education could be delivered by the organization itself or by partnering organizations within the scope of a broader program or project. Programs that include social skills and cross sectorial topics tend to have more positive impact and generally create more active participation among girls. There is evidence that including themes such as health, leadership, and livelihoods can complement integrated programs even further. CAMFED is one organization that has taken this approach and recent research by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine conducted in 2010 in Zimbabwe and Tanzania found that "93 percent of businesses started with CAMFED business grants earned a profit, with 92 percent of women surveyed putting some of their profits back into their businesses and nearly 83 percent contributing to essential household expenses".<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, and with a specific focus on girls, BRAC through its Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (SOFEA) program provides girls access to a microfinance program that includes safe spaces, small loans, life skills and livelihoods training. They provide adolescent girls with a multidisciplinary program to build their own financial assets—and combine it with lessons on reproductive health, social skills and leadership. The program is delivered first through BRAC staff who train women to further spread education through peer-to-peer teaching over the long term. Although BRAC's primary focus is on financial education, they have recently included a livelihood component. In addition, the entire program is

closely linked with an existing institution within the host community.<sup>53</sup>

Additionally, the MFO-Pop Council-K-Rep and Faulu-Kenya's Savings Project aim to "deliver a comprehensive package of training to girls, including life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and financial literacy training."<sup>54</sup> This program is implemented with the help of microfinance institutions in both Kenya and Uganda. The program teaches girls when, how and why to save money through mentors that the girls themselves select from their community.

The successes of these programs show why an integrated approach to financial education increases its overall effectiveness. For instance, in various BRAC's impact assessment evaluations in the field, we can find evidence that show that women not only begun to acquire a more positive self-perception and confidence but their awareness regarding gender equality both in family and professional life improved due to their active participation. Moreover, Jinnat Ara (2010) from BRAC concludes that "the adolescents translated the life skills training given by the program into action, helped increase mobility of the adolescents to health care centers and the parents' attitude towards gender equality improved significantly due to program intervention."<sup>55</sup>

There seems to be a strong correlation between financial instability and the adoption of detrimental reproductive and sexual practices among young girls. As previously noted for girls, economic vulnerability has been found to increase the likelihood of exchanging sex for money or goods, experiencing coerced sex, and not using a condom at last sex.<sup>56</sup>

CAMFED is an organization that has gained success through engaging the local community leaders rather than bringing in individuals from outside of the community into local projects. CAMFED provides resources for adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa to overcome barriers to education as they "work through national and local systems - with parents, teachers, government officials, and traditional authorities - to deliver them." Their programs "are devised, managed, and monitored by the community, and all of their Africa offices are staffed by nationals of that country."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Austrian K. and Muthengi E. (2011). "Can Economic Assets Increase Girls' Risk of Sexual Harassment? Evaluation Results from a Social, Health and Economic Asset - Building Intervention for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Uganda". Population Council, Kenya P. 3. Accessed March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://paa2014.princeton.edu/papers/140342>

<sup>52</sup> Camfed (2014). "Business training and financial literacy". Accessed March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <https://camfed.org/what-we-do/training/>

<sup>53</sup> Morcos, C. & Sebstad, J., (2011). "Financial Education for Adolescent Girls." Women's World Banking.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ara, J. & Das, N. C. (2010). "Working Paper No. 14. Impact Assessment of Adolescent Development Program in the Selective. Border Regions of Bangladesh." p.vi. Accessed march 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, on: [http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/BuildingAssets\\_Oct05.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/BuildingAssets_Oct05.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Population Council (2005) "Building Assets for Safe, Productive Lives: a Report on a Workshop on Adolescent Girls' Livelihoods." Population Council, Inc. New York, New York

<sup>57</sup> Marcus, R. (2014) "Gender Justice and Social Norms: Towards a conceptual framework." Overseas Development Institute, UK.

Some research thus shows that an integrated model has more positive impact on girls' empowerment, livelihoods, health and education than financial literacy alone. Evaluations have also found that girls especially appreciate having a nearby safe space of their own and being educated by their peers. Population Council is one example of an organization enhancing their integrated program with these provisions. Specific provisions and safe spaces have proven to be a beneficial component of any project targeting adolescent girls. According to Population Council safe spaces are place that are reserved for girls, due to the fact that "public spaces are often inhabited largely by men."<sup>58</sup> Before launching any project or program, it is necessary to find such spaces and to initiate dialogues with the adolescent girls of the community to determine where exactly they feel safe. The safe space model, includes "the three core elements of the structure of an adolescent girls program: safe place, friends and a mentor."<sup>59</sup> To ensure the viability of any project, providing these three components encourages adolescent girls to participate.

The Safe and Smart Savings project launched by Population Council and MicroSave, is an example of a project that implemented the safe spaces model. Through working with financial institutions in the area, the project was able to not only develop girl-friendly savings products, but also a social support system.<sup>60</sup> There were three main components to this project, including weekly meetings with a female mentor, financial education sessions and an individual savings account.<sup>61</sup> It was evaluated that the girls that participated in the project were "more likely than other girls to have financial goals and accurate financial knowledge, to know about HIV and reproductive health, and to discuss financial issues with parents" and also "less likely to be sexually harassed."<sup>62</sup> The success of this and various other projects that implemented the safe space model indicates that providing a social support system for adolescent girls is essential for the success of any project that is specifically targeting this group.

## Note on the Delivery of Integrated Programs

As demonstrated by the promising practices above, economically empowering adolescent girls can lead to several positive outcomes, including helping them improve decision-making through increased financial knowledge and practical money skills, establishing good savings habits,

and improving their future prospects for participation in the labor force.<sup>63</sup> However, economic empowerment programs can also inadvertently cause harm when investment in girls' livelihoods and girls' participation in these programs are not carefully monitored and evaluated to see how they affect child labor, school attendance, and girls' caregiving and other domestic responsibilities.<sup>64</sup> Recent studies of several sub-Saharan African programs have suggested that building economic assets can expose girls to new risks of gender-based violence as they change their patterns of movement and time use.<sup>65</sup> This is especially common among vulnerable communities.<sup>66</sup> Moreover the acquiring of financial assets and the use of financial services can even turn girls into targets for violence and harassment.<sup>67</sup> One pilot program found that girls provided with savings accounts experienced increased levels of sexual violence and harassment compared to girls who received accounts and participated in a weekly savings group that provided financial and health education.<sup>68</sup> This is why it is crucial to evaluate not only their socioeconomic status and situation but to also engage the community where they are living to address these risks.

Integrated programming is one approach for taking into account adolescent girls' unique needs and capacities, through building a more holistic set of assets that can help girls improve their economic prospects, while at the same time protecting them from risks they may face.<sup>69</sup> Provisions like the safe spaces concept should be considered as a platform to deliver integrated program models and multidisciplinary interventions for the economic empowerment of adolescent girls.

<sup>63</sup> Fewer, S. Ramos, J. & Dunning, D. (2013) "Economic Empowerment Strategies for Adolescent Girls: A research study conducted for the Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative". Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative. Accessed March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.letgirlslead.org/assets/pdfs/AGALI-Economic-Empowerment-Report-2013-.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Child Protection in Crisis, UNICEF, Women's Refugee Commission (2013) "Economic strengthening to reduce gender-based violence for adolescent girls in humanitarian settings", Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/childrenand youth/pdf/ES\\_GBVGirlsInEmergencies%2018%20Nov%202013.pdf](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/childrenand youth/pdf/ES_GBVGirlsInEmergencies%2018%20Nov%202013.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> A microcredit and life-skills HIV prevention program in Zimbabwe found, for example, that girls with petty trading businesses experienced exposure to GBV due to increased movement around their communities and between towns. See Dunbar, M. Maternowska, C., Kang, M., Laver, S., Mudekunya-Mahaka, I. and Padian, N. (2010) "Findings from SHAZ!: a Feasibility Study of a Microcredit and Life-skills HIV Prevention Intervention to Reduce Risk among Adolescent Female Orphans in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 38, 2.

<sup>67</sup> For example, Lautze and Raven-Roberts found that giving girls physical assets could turn those assets into liabilities and the girls themselves into targets. See Lautze, S. and Raven-Roberts, A. (2006) "Violence and complex humanitarian emergencies: implications for livelihoods models," *Disasters*, 2006 Dec; 30(4):383-401.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Austrian, K. & Muthengi, E. (2014) "Can Economic Assets Increase Girls' Risk of Sexual Harassment? Evaluation Results from a Social, Health and Economic Asset-Building Intervention for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Uganda". *Children and Youth Services Review* 47(2), p. 168-175

<sup>58</sup> Baldwin, W. (2011) "Creating "Safe Spaces" For Adolescent Girls." Population Council, p.1. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on:

[http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/39\\_SafeSpaces.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/39_SafeSpaces.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Population Council (2010) "Girl-Centered Program Design.", p.39. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on:

[http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2010PGY\\_AdolGirlToolkitComplete.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2010PGY_AdolGirlToolkitComplete.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Population Council. (2014). "Safe and Smart Savings." Accessed March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/safe-and-smart-savings>

<sup>61</sup> Austrian, K. & Muthengi, E. (2013) "Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Kenya and Uganda: Evaluation Report." Population Council.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

## 4. Gaps in Research and Recommendations

This feature has tried to summarize the available evidence on integrated financial education interventions and the role they can play for adolescent girls. While several exemplary programs have been implemented, overall, governments and civil society should focus on implementing policies that make access to integrated education programs for young girls easier, and consider

them a specific, separate target segment. Below we summarize some detailed, key recommendations for policy maker and people considering the design of programs for adolescent girls, which may further contribute to the impact of financial education interventions for young women.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is essential that youth serving organizations consider the age and developmental stages of adolescent girls when creating and adapting financial services and/or integrated programs. Special attention should be given to each subgroup and their needs (early and late adolescent). Marginalized and most vulnerable girls should specifically be included in broader programming schemes.
- Specific provisions for adolescent girls should be developed within existing programs in order to better meet their needs and protect them from all forms of Gender Based Violence (example: safe spaces model)
- Continue to focus on linking ECE and financial inclusion initiatives across the world that are designed with the specific needs of adolescent girls in mind. Despite the fact that several countries, as well as banks and civil society representatives, are starting to see the benefits and relevance of linking financial education with formal savings, a lot of work needs to be done. This involves strategic coordination with financial institutions, which can provide the infrastructure to support a formal savings component to various initiatives. The design of innovative alternative savings components that do not involve the inclusion of children in the formal financial system when the regulatory framework does not allow it is also encouraged.
- National authorities and leading civil society organizations should enhance linkages between already existing financial products with established high quality financial education programs in order to maximize the potential of these integrated services.
- To actively engage adolescent girls and young women in consultation during the drafting phases of policy and program design and evaluation.
- Create innovative evaluation methodologies that will measure not only the impact of interventions but the reduction of vulnerability among adolescent girls.
- Consider culturally appropriate approaches when integrating programs and addressing the specific needs of girls. More interventions and more multidisciplinary approaches must be considered in order to economically empower young girls, especially marginalized adolescents, such as girls with disabilities, migrant girls, and orphaned or girls living in foster care.
- Improve collaboration across sectors and agencies in all phases of program design and implementation.
- Focus on engaging parents and other family and community members in order to secure greater project buy in and impact.

## REMAINING GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE

There is a growing body of work that increasingly recognizes the intersection between the health and economic lives of adolescent girls. Evidence suggests that health-related interventions are not as effective if the underlying economic factors that lead girls into risky behaviors are not also addressed.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, promising practices in economic interventions indicate that when human and social assets are built among adolescent girls at the same time, interventions can increase girls' agency and decision making power, as well as having positive impact on reducing their risks to experiencing violence.<sup>71</sup> Because of the complex relationships between adolescent girls' economic empowerment and health and well-being outcomes, there is clearly no "one size fits all" approach for girls; more research is needed to understand the linkages between those outcomes:

- Girls in humanitarian settings are at heightened risk of GBV as protective systems and norms break down. Few programs have focused on economic empowerment for girls in crisis settings, despite the clear relationship between economic insecurity and some forms of GBV, and despite girls affected by crisis themselves consistently identifying livelihoods as a top priority.<sup>72</sup> This relationship needs to be explored further.
- More rigorous evaluation is needed to build evidence on economic empowerment programs that also measure girls' risks to gender-based violence.
- Although evidence for integrated programs is growing, further research is needed in examining which is the lowest cost intervention or delivery method with the greatest impact, as well as the relationships between those interventions.<sup>73</sup>
- Holistic programs that target girls' economic, health and social assets that successfully reach the most marginalized girls, including girls with disabilities, married and parenting girls, girls who are heads of households, migrant girls, and orphaned or girls living in foster care, into program design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

<sup>70</sup> Bruce, J. and Hallman, K. (2008). "Reaching the girls left behind." *Gender & Development*, 16 (2), p. 227–45.

<sup>71</sup> Dickson, K and Bangpan, M (2012). "Providing access to economic assets for girls and young women in low-and-lower middleincome countries. A systematic review of the evidence." London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

<sup>72</sup> Paik, K. (2014). "Strong Girls, Powerful Women: Program Planning and Design for Adolescent Girls in Humanitarian Settings". Women's Refugee Commission, New York.

<sup>73</sup> The Seep Network (2014). Stronger Interventions through Evidence: Population Council's Work with Adolescent Girls". Seep Webinar dated December 11, 2014. Accessed March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on: <http://www.seepnetwork.org/blog/stronger-interventions-evidence-population-councils-work-adolescent-girls>

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Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) lead the world's most extensive child and youth finance Network, that together makes up the Child and Youth Finance Movement. We connect Ministries and Governments, CEOs, heads of NGOs, financial institutions and children. By aligning and coordinating efforts of organizations all over the world the Movement is able to share resources, model best practices and empower each other to reach the target of the Movement: Reaching 100 million children in 100 countries by 2015 with financial inclusion and financial education to make sure that every child and youth have access to a basic savings account and the financial knowledge and skills needed to operate this account. By doing this we aim to give the adults of tomorrow the tools to lead lives free from poverty and financial instability.

[www.childfinanceinternational.org](http://www.childfinanceinternational.org)  
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[www.childfinanceinternational.org/movement/publications](http://www.childfinanceinternational.org/movement/publications)

## Global Money Week (GMW)

Global Money Week is a global celebration, initiated by the Child and Youth Finance Movement, with local and regional events and activities aimed at inspiring children and youth to learn about money, saving, creating livelihoods, gaining employment and becoming an entrepreneur. GMW takes place every year during the second week of March.

**GMW 2014 outreach:** 3 million children and youth via 490 organizations and over 2000 activities in 118 countries.

**GMW 2013 outreach:** 1 million children and youth via 400 organizations in 80 countries.

And, each year the numbers keep growing!

[www.globalmoneyweek.org](http://www.globalmoneyweek.org)  
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## CYFI Youth

CYFI Youth is a platform initiated by Child and Youth Finance for children and youth to take action in reshaping the future of finance. It allows for youngsters to stay informed about the latest Child and Youth Finance Movement activities going on around the globe so they can remain active and involved in the Movement. CYFI Youth also serves as a bridge between young people and adults as children and youth are encouraged to utilize this platform to share their experiences and voice their opinions.

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## Ye!

The Ye! online platform is targeted at young entrepreneurs between 16 and 30 years old. Ye! connects young entrepreneurs around the world and links them to various tools, resources and opportunities to support the growth of their ventures. The Ye! platform provides young entrepreneurs with business knowledge, an online community and social network, a coaching program and links to funding opportunities.

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