



Learn Work Thrive

The innovative features of the 'Adolescent Girls Initiative' pilot projects help girls make the vital transition between school and work.

SYNOPSIS

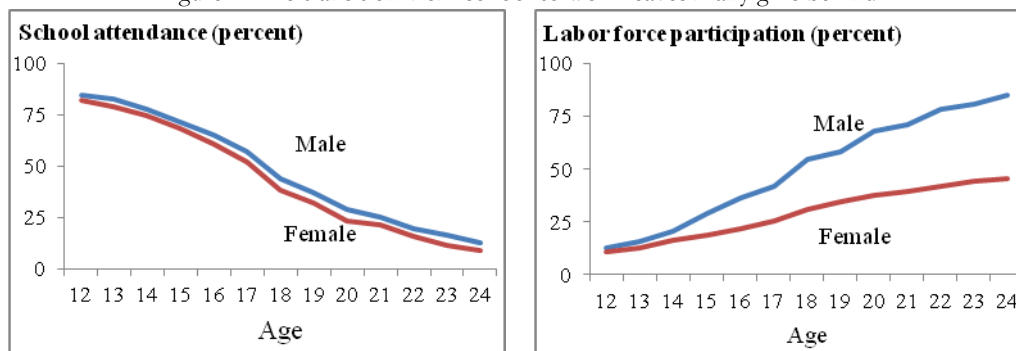
In 2008, the World Bank launched the 'Adolescent Girls Initiative' to promote the transition of young women from school to productive employment. The program is being piloted in eight low-income countries (Afghanistan, Jordan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Haiti, Nepal, Rwanda, and South Sudan) and is currently reaching some 17,000 girls. Each program is individually tailored to the country context, with a common goal of discovering *what works best in programming to help adolescent girls and young women succeed in the labor market?* With new knowledge of what works, successful approaches can be replicated and brought to scale.

Challenge

Girls are stalled between school and productive work: more than a third—34 percent—of young women in developing countries are jobless—out of the labor force and not in school. Although the gender gap in school enrollment has been closing, the gender gap in labor force participation is on the rise (see Figure 1 below).

Reaching girls during adolescence is critical—decisions made and behaviors established during this period affect their horizons later in life. Adolescence for boys typically ushers increased mobility and autonomy, but for girls it often comes with increased restrictions—fewer opportunities and less freedom to exercise choice. During this formative period in their lives, it is important to provide adolescent girls with the tools they need to become economically empowered young women.

Figure 1: The transition from school to work leaves many girls behind



Source: World Bank Living Standard Measurement Surveys (1998-2008).

“This is our chance to be independent. This is my chance to learn new things, and be a leader in my community—and one day teach other girls. We can’t allow our fear to overcome us.”

— Princess Sheriff, New Kru Town, Liberia

“Before I went into the program, I didn’t know what to expect. I didn’t know how to communicate well. I didn’t know how a CV is done. Now, I know how to meet with Human Resources and I know how to negotiate.”

— Borhan , Irbid, Jordan

Approach

The Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) aims to promote the transition of adolescent girls and young women from school to productive employment. Interventions range from business development to technical and vocational training targeting skills in high demand; all projects include life skills training. The design of each pilot is tailored to the local context and addresses the specific constraints faced by girls. A rigorous impact evaluation of each pilot will help build the evidence of what works. The AGI provides a unique opportunity to break new ground—to experiment, take risks and find smart ways of introducing girl-friendly approaches to vocational training and youth employment programs.

Reaching vulnerable girls

Often the most vulnerable girls are unable to participate in training programs due to prohibitive time or monetary costs. The first step toward reaching this population of girls is to understand their needs and constraints. The AGI pilots are finding ways to make programs more accessible to the most vulnerable.

Challenging gender norms in the labor market

Oftentimes social norms relegate girls to traditional trades that are typically low paying. Girls’ families, male partners, employers, or even the girls themselves may think that certain jobs are only for men, not “women’s work.” The job skills training components of the AGI pilots aim to equip girls with technical skills for which there is a proven demand in the local labor market.

Bridging the gap to the labor market

When it comes to finding a job, many adolescent girls and young women struggle because they are more socially isolated, with fewer contacts to help them job search. The AGI pilots are actively helping girls grow their networks and link to employment opportunities. The AGI pilots are also exploring ways to incentivize placement for girls.

Building girls’ assets for entrepreneurial success

The AGI pilots are building girls’ assets—human, social and financial—and supporting girls who want to venture into self-employment. Many of the pilots are teaching girls budgeting and business development skills combined with the opportunity to practice savings.

Bolstering girls’ and young women’s personal agency

Through the delivery of life skills trainings, the AGI pilots are working to equip adolescent girls and young women with the tools and confidence they need to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Life skills trainings focus on developing girls’ non-cognitive skills across multiple domains (social, emotional, personality, behaviors, attitudes. etc.). Specific topics include reproductive health, rights awareness, problem solving techniques, communication and negotiation skills, and know-how on managing personal finances.

“It is an incredible experience and opportunity for me. My project focuses on manufacture of Lao traditional handicrafts and giving job opportunities to women affected by HIV and AIDS. I’m really looking forward to continue working and to make my dream a reality.”

—Phennapha Phommachanh, Vientiane, Lao PDR

“Before joining this program, I did not think I could ever have some skills to offer out there in order to get a decent job and pay. Now, I have learnt to drive and soon will be employed. I have also learnt so many life skills like family planning, personal hygiene, HIV/AIDS and so on, which my family and friends have also benefitted from. I now believe I can be a life changer.”

—Sunday Margaret, Juba, South Sudan

Results

Progress and preliminary results from five pilots currently under implementation:

Lao Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI):

- Implementation started in December 2010. A business plan competition for young entrepreneurs was launched successfully and 95 selected candidates (two-thirds female) have followed training programs on “Start your Business” and “Write a Business Plan.” The first Young Entrepreneur Marketplace Competition took place June 18, 2011, showcasing the ideas of 50 young entrepreneurs (30 business plans) and awarding 11 of them grants to start-up businesses. Training is being provided to mentors from the private sector who will support grantees as they set up businesses.

Two first-of-its kind career centers were established in the National University of Laos and the Pakpasak Technical College.

Liberia – Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG):

- Training is being delivered in two rounds. In the first round (March 2010), 1,131 girls received business, job and life skills training. About 95 percent of the beneficiaries completed the training, and 85 percent of those trained have been placed in jobs or are engaged in self-employment activities. The second round of training started in July 2011 with 1,300 adolescent girls and young women. Business, internship and job placement for this second cohort began at the end of January 2012.
- EPAG also ran a short literacy / numeracy training course before the second round of training from late March through early July 2011 for 65 girls in Bentol and 185 girls in Kakata. These girls entered the EPAG training in July 2011. Literacy / numeracy strengthening activities for all 1,300 EPAG Round Two trainees is ongoing.



Liberian trainees receiving their training completion certificate (Credit: Credit: Eve Lotter, EPAG Coordinator)

Jordan – New Work Opportunities for Women (NOW):

- The pilot launched in December 2010. A total of 373 recent community college graduates have received employability skills training (45 hours of instruction in team building, communications, presentations, business writing, customer service, resume writing, interviewing, and positive thinking).
- Short-term wage subsidies (vouchers) were used to give firms an incentive for hiring young female graduates. A total of 300 community college graduates have found employment using the wage subsidy. These women experienced a 40 percent increase in their likelihood of employment compared to women who did not receive vouchers. Approximately 57 percent of women who have a wage voucher were working expect to continue to work with the same firm after the expiry of their voucher.

Nepal – Adolescent Girls Employment Initiative (AGEI):

- Implementation started in February 2010. Approximately 810 women were trained by December 2010, and 96 percent (776) took a skills test with a pass rate of 90 percent. Three months after they reported being employed, an

employment verification survey was conducted and about 73 percent of the women were still in employment at that point in time. Under the ‘Institutional Strengthening’ component, the project has supported the development of new monitoring guidelines and an online database system for technical and vocational education providers, which is now being used by the Ministry of Education for the new International Development Association (IDA)-supported project on vocational education and training.

South Sudan – Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI):

- A total of 100 adolescent clubs with girl members were established in five counties in four states of South Sudan.
- Approximately 3,000 adolescent girls are receiving life skills and livelihoods training. As of November 2011, nearly 700 girls had received livelihood training, with the remaining trainings to be com-

pleted in 2012. All girls will also receive financial literacy training, with over 1,500 girls participating as of November 2011. The savings and microcredit component of the program started in November 2011.

- Informal conversations with girls and young women show high levels of engagement and confidence reflected in behavior change in areas such as protection against rape, early pregnancy, contraception and family planning in general, and increased knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS.

Bank Contribution

The AGI program is supported by US\$23 million from the Bank’s Adolescent Girls Initiative Trust Fund and the Gender Action Plan Trust Fund.

Partners

Australia, Denmark, Girl Hub, Norway, Nike Foundation, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

LEARN MORE

Link to Key Related Sites

- Adolescent Girls Initiative website: www.worldbank.org/gender/agi
- AGI Slideshow: <http://www.worldbank.org/wb/slideshows/adolescent-girls-initiative-fall-2011/>
- AGI Launch event 2008: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21936963~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>
- AGI Progress event 2010: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/meetings/giving-adolescent-girls-a-fair-chance>

Link to Pilot Results

- Jordan: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22872667~menuPK:141311~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>
- Lao PDR: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPA_CIFICEXT/LAOPRDEXTN/0,,contentMDK:22785657~menuPK:293689~pagePK:64027988~piPK:64027986~theSitePK:293684,00.html
- Liberia: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGENDER/Resources/AGILiberiaBrief.pdf>

Pilot Videos

- Liberia: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rP4-b1FN_g
- Jordan: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umTXvmeTFdk>
- Lao PDR: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BalSOv9h8s>
- Nepal: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rP4-b1FN_g