



the girl effect

## Why Should We Pay Attention to Girls?

Little research has been done to understand how investments in girls impact economic growth and the health and well-being of communities. This lack of data reveals how pervasively girls have been overlooked. For millions of girls across the developing world, there are no systems to record their birth, their citizenship, or even their identity. However, the existing research suggests their impact can reach much farther than expected.

### The Ripple Effect

- When a girl in the developing world receives seven or more years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.  
(United Nations Population Fund, *State of World Population 1990*.)
- An extra year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10 to 20 percent. An extra year of secondary school: 15 to 25 percent.  
(George Psacharopoulos and Harry Anthony Patrinos, "Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update," Policy Research Working Paper 2881 [Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2002].)
- Research in developing countries has shown a consistent relationship between better infant and child health and higher levels of schooling among mothers.  
(George T. Bicego and J. Ties Boerma, "Maternal Education and Child Survival: A Comparative Study of Survey Data from 17 Countries," *Social Science and Medicine* 36 (9) [May 1993]: 1207–27.)
- When women and girls earn income, they reinvest 90 percent of it into their families, as compared to only 30 to 40 percent for a man.  
(Chris Fortson, "Women's Rights Vital for Developing World," *Yale News Daily* 2003.)

### Population Trends

- Today, more than 600 million girls live in the developing world.  
Girls Count, 14  
(Population Reference Bureau, DataFinder database, <http://www.prb.org/datafinder.aspx> [accessed December 20, 2007].)
- More than one-quarter of the population in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa are girls and young women ages 10 to 24.  
Girls Count, 15  
(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision," <http://esa.un.org/unpp>, and "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision," [www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WUP2005/2005WUP\\_DataTables1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WUP2005/2005WUP_DataTables1.pdf).)
- The total global population of girls ages 10 to 24—already the largest in history—is expected to peak in the next decade.  
Girls Count, 14  
(Ruth Levine et al., *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda* [Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2008].)

## Educational Gaps

- Approximately one-quarter of girls in developing countries are not in school.  
(Cynthia B. Lloyd, ed., *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries* [Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2005].)
- Out of the world's 130 million out-of-school youth, 70 percent are girls.  
(Human Rights Watch, "Promises Broken: An Assessment of Children's Rights on the 10th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child," <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/promises/education.html> [December 1999].)

## Child Marriage and Early Childbirth

- One girl in seven in developing countries marries before age 15.  
Girls Count, 41  
(Population Council, "Transitions to Adulthood: Child Marriage/Married Adolescents," <http://www.popcouncil.org/ta/mar.html> [updated May 13, 2008].)
- 38 percent marry before age 18.  
Girls Count, 41  
(Cynthia B. Lloyd, ed., *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries* [Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2005].)
- One-quarter to one-half of girls in developing countries become mothers before age 18; 14 million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth in developing countries each year.  
Girls Count, 3  
(United Nations Population Fund, *State of World Population 2005*, <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005>.)
- In Nicaragua, 45 percent of girls with no schooling are married before age 18 versus only 16 percent of their educated counterparts. In Mozambique, the figures are 60 percent versus 10; in Senegal, 41 percent versus 6.  
Girls Count, 44  
(International Center for Research on Women, *Too Young to Wed: Education & Action Toward Ending Child Marriage*, [http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006\\_cmtoolkit/cm\\_all.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_cmtoolkit/cm_all.pdf) [2007].)
- A survey in India found that girls who married before age 18 were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped, or threatened by their husbands as were girls who married later.  
(International Center for Research on Women, *Development Initiative on Supporting Healthy Adolescents* [2005], analysis of quantitative baseline survey data collected in select sites in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand, India [survey conducted in 2004].)

## Health

- Medical complications from pregnancy are the leading cause of death among girls ages 15 to 19 worldwide. Compared with women ages 20 to 24, girls ages 10 to 14 are five times more likely to die from childbirth, and girls 15 to 19 are up to twice as likely, worldwide.  
(United Nations Children's Fund, *Equality, Development and Peace*, [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/pub\\_equality\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/pub_equality_en.pdf) [New York: UNICEF, 2000], 19.)
- 75 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds living with HIV in Africa are female, up from 62 percent in 2001.  
Girls Count, 48  
(Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, *Keeping the Promise: An Agenda for Action on Women and AIDS*, [http://data.unaids.org/pub/Booklet/2006/20060530\\_FS\\_Keeping\\_Promise\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/Booklet/2006/20060530_FS_Keeping_Promise_en.pdf)[2006a].)