

BRIEFING

# Take Action Girls' Adolescence

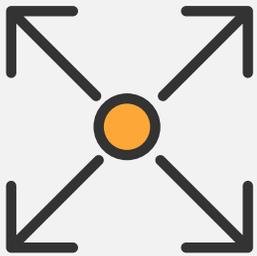
*FREEDOM. CHOICE. RESPECT.*



# SHE IS

NOT a commodity to be traded  
NOT an object of desire  
NOT a burden to discard

# A GIRL



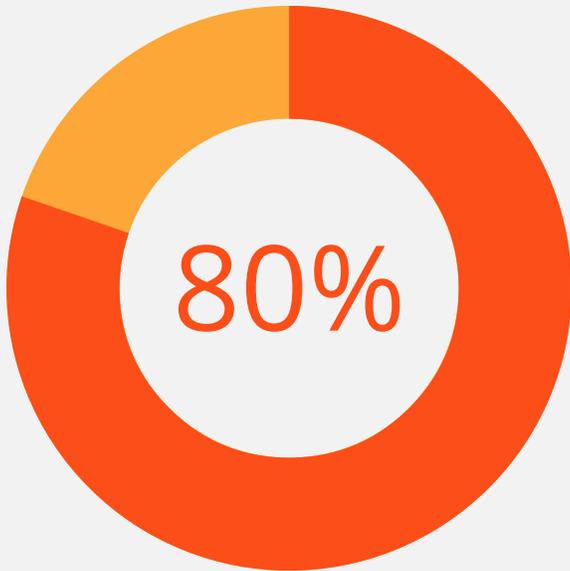
## A profound transformation

Adolescence is a time of vast transformation. It is a time of rapid physical, social and emotional change. It can be empowering and exciting, but it is also a time when inequality is intensified.

During adolescence, dominant gender norms which undermine and devalue girls are formed and the power imbalance between girls and boys is intensified. This often results in oppression, discrimination, and violence against girls.

Strict control over a girl's behaviour, her actions and her relationships restricts her movement, which increases isolation and marginalisation.

Girls are often denied equal opportunities, including education and participation in social activities. They are expected to be domestic and look after the house and the family, which interrupts schooling and impairs important social friendships.



80% of children in Papua New Guinea experience some form of **physical, verbal and/or sexual abuse.**

## GIRLS AT RISK

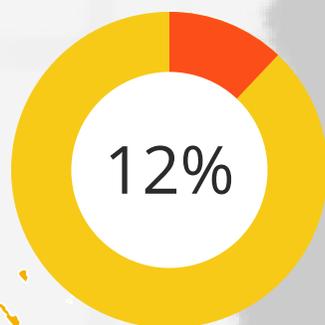
As girls progress through their formative years, the risk of sexual harassment, assault, and rape increases.

The risk of child, early and forced marriage also surges. This places adolescent girls at a higher risk of sexual, physical, emotional, and economic violence as they silently struggle within these intimate relationships.

The consequences of this violence are both severe and long-lasting. Sexual, physical, and emotional violence against adolescent girls is associated with high-risk pregnancies, increased rates of maternal death and morbidity, severe physical injury, greater risk of sexually transmitted infections, and poor mental health.

Emergencies exacerbate girls' risk of experiencing harm; girls in emergencies experience higher rates of rape, intimate partner violence, coerced sex, sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, trafficking, abduction, early and forced marriage and early and/or unintended pregnancy.





12% of women aged 15-19 are having children in Papua New Guinea

## PREGNANCY & EXCLUSION

Girls experience greater social marginalisation and exclusion from essential health services than boys and older women. Girls are often denied sexual and reproductive health services, which can result in unwanted pregnancy.

When a girl becomes pregnant, her life can change radically. Her education may end and job prospects diminish. She becomes more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. Globally, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among adolescent girls.

Adolescent pregnancy is generally not the result of a deliberate choice – these girls often have little say over decisions affecting their lives. Rather, early pregnancy is a consequence of little or no access to school, information, or health care.



## A RARE OPPORTUNITY. DON'T MISS IT.

Adolescent girls are often overlooked in development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian work. One of the challenges is the classification of adolescent girls within children aged 0-18. Girls are often more likely to be physically and socially isolated and harder to reach.

Yet, this is a missed opportunity.

Adolescence is a unique time and critical for forming and enacting values and social norms, such as equality, freedom, and respect. We must recognise that adolescent girls are a distinct group that require distinct support - not just for them, but also for future generations.



# TAKE ACTION



**Invest** in quality, non-judgemental and accessible services for adolescent girls. This should include sexual and reproductive health services and services for survivors of violence.

**Provide** accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education and add it to the national curriculum. Ensure teachers have the skills and resources to deliver and monitor.

**Ensure** girls who become pregnant can continue their education during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Policy makers



**Create** a safe and supportive environment for girls to assume public leadership and decision-making roles without fear of discrimination, harassment or violence.

**Actively** reject attitudes, ideas and behaviours that discriminate against girls and women.

**Create** an environment where girls who experience violence feel supported to seek help without fear of stigma or retribution.

Young people



**Recognise** adolescent girls as a distinct group in data collection and analysis. Generate knowledge, data and evidence of the needs and preferences of adolescent girls.

**Support** empowerment activities through female-only safe spaces that are tailored to the diverse needs of adolescent girls. This includes girls who are pregnant, not in school, those with a disability and of diverse sexual orientation.

**Fund** services for adolescent girls who experience violence.

International community

