



# RESULTS SERIES EMPOWERING GIRLS FOR LASTING IMPACTS

Governments are spending more than ever before on youth employment programs but rarely do they explicitly target young women. For girls, developing strong life skills is key to building their capacity to deal effectively with everyday life.

## THE CHALLENGE



Young women tend to have less education, and time available for paid work because of domestic responsibilities and they often do not pursue jobs in high-paying fields because they are not considered suitable for women.



There's also a strong family formation dimension to young women's employment decisions.

## THE RESULT



Teaching life and livelihood skills to adolescent girls in safe clubs led to a marked increase in self-employment and a decrease in early pregnancy and marriage.



The model is being used by projects for adolescent girls and young women in many other countries, including for over 600,000 young women in India.

A lack of marketable skills stops young people from getting jobs in many developing countries. Young women are especially disadvantaged because girls have lower secondary school completion rates than boys, and social and cultural barriers can restrict women's job options.

While governments are investing in youth employment programs, these often fail to target women. This may be in part because of lack of knowledge of what elements make a program effective in addressing the specific challenges facing young women transitioning to the labor market.

Supported by the [Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality](#), the World Bank Group's (WBG) [Africa Gender Innovation Lab](#), together with the Adolescent Girls Initiative, has generated some of the strongest evidence to date on skills development programs for adolescent girls and young women.

In Uganda, the Africa Gender Innovation Lab evaluated the *Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents Program*, which has been implemented in several countries by the international development organization BRAC. The program creates a network of clubs for adolescent girls where they can safely discuss challenges with their peers in small groups and build their social networks. Mentors teach



life skills that include education about sex and marriage, as well as short-term livelihood training in areas like agriculture and poultry rearing. For a cost of less than US \$100 per girl per year, the program is very cost-effective.

Compared to young women in communities without these clubs, girls in this program were 72 percent more likely to be engaged in income-generating activities two years later, driven by a marked increase in self-employment. This raised their monthly spending money by 38 percent. Teen pregnancies were 26 percent lower, and the rate of early marriage and cohabitation was 58 percent lower. The share of girls forced to have sex against their will in the previous twelve months was nearly halved, and the age that girls said they wanted to get married and have children and childbearing both rose.

There are also indications that these benefits may extend beyond these girls to their brothers. [Additional research](#) suggests empowered girls trigger a surge in their brothers' competitiveness. In Liberia, the comparable

*Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Program* run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, provided classroom-based technical and life skills training for young women, as well as follow-up support. Here, a randomized impact evaluation found employment to increase by 47 percent and earnings by 80 percent.

[Lessons from Uganda and Liberia](#) are now shaping the WBG's design of larger projects for adolescent girls and young women. In India, the *Tejaswini Socioeconomic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls & Young Women project* provides girls aged 14 to 24 community-based social support, life skills education, business skills, and vocational training. It aims to reach about 680,000 young women. The [South Asia Gender Innovation Lab](#) is now evaluating Tejaswini to learn about how to take a model mainly implemented by international NGOs in Africa to scale as part of a large government-run program with multiple local NGOs as implementers in the state of Jharkhand in India.



The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality is a World Bank Group multidonor trust fund investing in knowledge, diagnostics, impact evaluations and data to help policy makers and practitioners close gender gaps in countries and sectors. Learn more on [www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge](http://www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge)

