

ACT WITH HER: Forging Panoramic Pathways with Girls from Adolescence to Adulthood

Working with Very Young Adolescent Girls and Boys: Perspectives from the Frontline

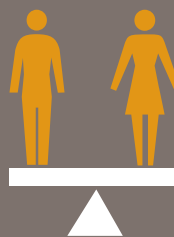
Act With Her is a five-year program in Ethiopia that partners with girls to forge the health, education, economic, and social pathways they need to thrive during the transition to adulthood. We engage girls, boys, and their parents or caregivers in sessions over 10 months, and in some areas also work over a longer period to catalyze shifts in social and gender norms and in the adolescent-friendliness of key systems and services.

Designed to separately serve very young adolescents (VYAs) and older adolescents, with a learning period built in between, we engaged the first cohort of VYAs from March 2019 through January 2020, with over 13,000 girls and boys participating in over 500 groups. Through perspectives shared by adolescents and our frontline staff we learned:



Like all people, adolescents do not live their lives in siloes

Young people told us about interconnected change, like better menstrual health helping school attendance, or girls getting more time for school or homework after boys began to share family chores with them.



When you are young, gender beliefs may shift quickly

"I was considering myself as less than men...but it's wrong. I can do what boys do." — GIRL PARTICIPANT

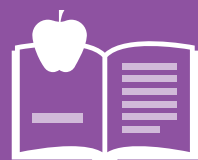
Very young adolescents are socially and intellectually mature enough to be engaged in monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Meaningful youth engagement should not stop at design and implementation. We successfully gathered routine feedback from young adolescents, and shared aggregated key points back with them.



Including boys in girl-centered programming carries benefits and caveats

Neither boys nor communities were in favor of a lighter-touch approach for boys as compared to girls, so gender-synchronized models may work best with equal programming for both.



Younger adolescents are quite eager to learn and apply new ideas—and to have fun

Girls and boys were most engaged during participatory, play-based, and creative learning activities.



Younger adolescents have a lot of chores, and parents are in full control

Levels of household work and parental authority tend to be particularly high in early adolescence, and both need consideration when working with this age group.

Act With Her is led by Pathfinder International, in collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia, in partnership with CARE International, and with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Evidence of impact is being assessed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research consortium.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT www.pathfinder.org/projects/act-with-her/

