



Adolescent
Girls Initiative

Measuring Impact in the AGI Pilots

Through pilot interventions that are rigorously evaluated, the Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) is providing cross-country evidence on how programs can help smooth young women's transition to productive work. Researchers and policymakers know a lot about the challenges faced by young women accessing the labor market, but much less about the types of programs that work best for helping them succeed. By measuring the impact of programs and delivering important lessons on design and targeting, the AGI evaluations aim to improve policy decisions around adolescent girl programming.

Lesson Learned: Evaluators should weigh the trade-offs between rigor and feasibility.

The AGI is conducting impact evaluations in six countries, and non-experimental evaluations in two countries where more rigorous techniques were not feasible (see Figure 1). Impact evaluation assesses the changes—both intended and unintended—that can be attributed to a particular policy or program. AGI impact evaluations use a “control” group of girls to understand what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. Forming a control group may be an unpopular idea—particularly when working with vulnerable adolescent girls who are in need of services. If this is the case, a randomized pipeline may be considered; in Liberia and Haiti training is delivered in rounds so that all of the young women can eventually participate in the program. However, once the second round of trainees begins the program, they are no longer a credible control group. Ideally evaluators will want to know the longer-term impacts of programs.

Figure 1: Evaluation Design Strategies of the AGI Pilots

Impact Evaluations	Afghanistan	Randomized
	Haiti	Randomized Pipeline
	Jordan	Randomized
	Nepal	Regression Discontinuity
	Liberia	Randomized Pipeline
	South Sudan	Randomized (cluster level)
Evaluations	Lao	Pre- and post- surveys
	Rwanda	Pre- and post-surveys among random sample of beneficiaries

Lesson Learned: It is useful to understand the full set of socio-economic benefits of investing in girls.

Changes in AGI outcomes are measured using specific indicators collected in two surveys: i) a survey conducted among the adolescent girls, and ii) a separate survey conducted among the heads of their households. There are two objectives for collecting data on household-level characteristics and outcomes. The first is to control for household socioeconomic status; young women from wealthier households are likely to have different outcomes than those from relatively poorer households. The second objective of the household survey is to determine if investing in young women can lead to broader development gains for the household through spill-over effects. If AGI trainees earn more money, it is important to know what she does with her higher income. Does she contribute to household welfare in some way? Does she send her

“[Life skills training] has helped us know how to talk to people.”

Liberia EPAG trainee from Doe Community



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kids or siblings to school? Does the household rely less on borrowing from expensive moneylenders? The best way to measure these outcomes is with a household questionnaire.

Lesson Learned: Young women’s lives won’t stand still, so keep track of the control group.

Because people—and particularly youth—can be highly mobile, some incentives may be needed to maintain contact with the control group. However, control and treatment groups should be treated symmetrically so as not to introduce bias into the evaluation. It is helpful to obtain contact information for young women’s friends and caregivers who may be less likely to move. In South Sudan and Afghanistan the projects planned a mid-line tracking survey to update contact information.

Lesson Learned: Survey enumerators should be sensitized and trained to interview young women.

AGI surveys are implemented by local, independent survey firms. The firms often employ young females as enumerators and interviews are conducted in safe spaces where girls feel at-ease. This is important for the well-being of the interviewee, as well as for eliciting truthful responses. Enumerators are trained to strictly respect confidentiality, collect sensitive information, and respond if the interview uncovers that a girl is in danger. In Liberia and Afghanistan, interviewers are equipped with referral systems to local service providers in case they discover situations of abuse. All AGI pilots seek informed parental consent for girls under age 18 and sensitize parents, guardians and the young women so they fully understand the interview process. Interviewers remind respondents that they can skip questions they find particularly uncomfortable, and scripted pauses are incorporated into the surveys.

Lesson Learned: Paint a broad picture of young women’s accumulation and retention of economic gains.

Young women are complicated economic actors. They acquire assets from a variety of sources: families (as gifts, marriage-related transfers, or inheritance), boys or potential boyfriends, their own employment and savings, or transfers from government or NGOs. An economic intervention may influence their access to or reliance on these different sources. It is also important for evaluations to investigate whether participants retain economic gains. For example, an evaluation that only measures a young woman’s changes in employment or wages could paint one picture. Meanwhile, she could be compelled to give her wages to her husband or another authority figure in her life. A good survey should assess these and other potential unintended effects of the program. AGI surveys measure economic changes in the following areas:

- **Income-Generating Activities and Business Practices.** Surveys ask about employment status, income (both cash and in-kind), business practices, the time spent on each income-generating activity, the type of activity, where the work is done, and whether the young woman is working for herself or someone else. Questions on business practices inquire about record-keeping, money management, and business registration. Surveys also ask about past income generating activities (which activities, how long ago, for how long, reason for stopping) and business plans for the future.
- **Financial Literacy.** Assessing financial literacy is important in projects like the AGI because acquiring the knowledge of how to manage resources is part of the empowerment process. Surveys assess whether girls know what to ask before taking out a loan, and if they can identify the types of services available at a bank.
- **Savings and Loans.** Surveys ask about savings to determine if the AGI’s financial literacy and savings components increase the likelihood that participants will save, either formally or informally. Surveys also ask about access to credit, which can be an important source of business capital and may reduce the need for young women to borrow from family and friends for subsistence. Respondents are asked about lending to see if they use their increased income to give loans to their family and friends.

“Now decision making on use of the income also has become different, as the wife now brings in the money. She brings in money and we see what we do. When she comes with money it also gives her power. If she uses the money for the shop, it will not make me angry.”

Husband of an AGI trainee in South Sudan

- **Expenditures and Transfers.** Respondents are asked about their expenditures on themselves, on family members and on their partners. This is often a more reliable way to measure wealth than asking about income directly. It can also be used to determine if girls are investing in their families' long-term development, or if their earnings are being co-opted by others. Surveys also ask about receipt of transfers in order to ascertain if the AGI reduces a girl's reliance on transfers from others (including aid groups or boyfriends).
- **Assets.** Surveys ask about respondents' ownership of assets and about their ability to make decisions over how to use their own assets. For adolescent girls and young women, asset ownership may be a bargaining chip within the household or a source of insurance against risky lifestyles.

Lesson Learned: Evaluations of girl-centered programs should include non-economic indicators.

Non-economic aspects of well-being reflect young women's overall welfare and development and can also affect economic outcomes. Comprehensive programs like the AGI that bundle economic interventions with life skills and other support services will likely underestimate their impact if evaluations focus purely on economic outcomes. For example, recent studies show that economic interventions can have large impacts on young women's sexual and reproductive health and behaviors and their exposure to coercive sex. The AGI pilots—through life skills training and support services (e.g. mentorship and job intermediation)—seek to improve young women's overall welfare and look at impact in the following areas:

- **Relationships, Family and Social Networks.** Surveys measure young women's social network, including family support, coaches or mentors, and business contacts. These social assets can be both a determinant of success in the program (e.g. a partner's negative attitude may deter success) and a potential outcome of the program.
- **Life Satisfaction and Worries.** These non-economic expressions are important to capture because they can be control variables (the amount of stress in a young woman's life affects her success in the project) and because changes in these expressions could be attributed to the program.
- **Time Use.** Data is collected on the amount of time that respondents spend on paid work, unpaid work and leisure activities. Many women and girls face a "double burden" of responsibility for unpaid domestic duties in addition to their work for money. Surveys measure the extent to which the program increases the likelihood that participants engage in paid work, and how this may or may not reduce their domestic duties.
- **Personal Behaviors, Sexual Behaviors, HIV/AIDS Awareness and Violence.** Surveys ask about personal behaviors in order to control for differences among people in terms of their risk adversity. Changes are measured in contraceptive knowledge, knowledge of HIV transmission, receipt of money/gifts in exchange for sex, and so forth. Respondents are also asked about their experience of violence to determine if the program, by promoting girl's economic activity, may lessen or unintentionally increase this risk.

"Life skills was really helpful in the community because things that happened before like early marriage, which is not happening that much anymore."

**Adolescent Club
Leader in Yei,
South Sudan**

Lesson Learned: Programs that aim to empower young women should explicitly evaluate these outcomes.

The AGI considers a young woman to be economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make decisions and act on them. What it means to be empowered varies across settings, across sexes, according to age, and many other variables. It is important to use locally-tailored and validated measures of empowerment to get reliable information. While there is no single measure of empowerment, the AGI surveys inquire about the following, which are thought to be important for female empowerment:

- **Mobility.** Respondents are asked about their physical mobility outside of the home. By building public recognition of their economic potential, the AGI may help transform some of the cultural norms that restrict young women's movement.

- **Decision-Making and Control over Resources.** Surveys ask whether young women have their own money and about their ability to make decisions on spending money. Surveys also ask about young women's decision-making over family formation (e.g. when to get married and how many children to have).
- **Aspirations, Expectations and Confidence.** The AGI—particularly through the life skills component—seeks to promote young women's self-confidence and aspirations for the future. Surveys include questions on employment aspirations, including future business plans and knowledge about labor market demands and how to job search, as well as aspirations for returning to school.
- **Self-Regulation.** Self-control is thought to be both a potential determinant of success in the AGI and possibly an outcome of the program. The econometric literature shows that conscientiousness and having an internal locus of control are associated with positive education and earnings outcomes. A brief module is also included to understand young women's preference for delaying immediate gains in anticipation of receiving larger gains in the future.

Lesson Learned: Look at disaggregated effects to understand who is benefitting (and who is not).

"I have more dignity and self-respect in particular in my community...I am proud to be an electrician as I am self dependent now. What is even more important, my family no longer faces poverty because I am able to provide for them. After my success now the society is proud that a female can also do works as an electrician...I have expanded my network and now I do not need to search for work rather people come to me."

Nepal AGI trainee from Rupandehi

Adolescent girls are not a homogeneous group; important distinctions arise from differences in age, schooling/enrollment status, marital status, motherhood, family wealth, and so forth. Disaggregated impact data can help implementers make informed decisions about the appropriate beneficiary profile for the program. Programs can then adjust the selection and recruitment processes to focus on those who can benefit most, or programs may adjust the design to improve outcomes among certain sub-groups. AGI evaluations seek to determine if the program works differently for different people according to their:

- **Socio-Demographic Characteristics.** Information on a variety of variables is collected (age, marital status, education history and reason for leaving schooling, etc.) to paint a picture of a young woman's background. Information on past or current participation in other training programs is also collected since it could be a determinant of success in the AGI.
- **Analytical Ability.** A Raven's Test—a non-verbal assessment of analytical ability that has been tested across many countries—is included in the AGI surveys as a control variable to determine if the program works better for people with a certain profile of ability.
- **Wartime Experiences.** The AGI targets post-conflict countries because these are settings in which young women have often missed their opportunity for formal schooling and have to "catch-up" after the conflict is over. Lingering effects, such as psychological effects, lack of social cohesion, high crime rates, and lack of family support can affect labor market outcomes and performance in a training program. Several AGI surveys ask about the extent to which trainees were personally affected by conflict in the past.

Endnotes

1. In cases where the adolescent girl herself is the head of her household, she is asked to provide information both about herself and her household.
2. Bandiera, O, N Buehren, R Burgess, M Goldstein, S Gulesci, I Rasul, and M Sulaiman. 2012. "Empowering Adolescent Girls: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Uganda." <http://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/rburgess/wp/ELA.pdf>
3. Baird, S, C McIntosh, and B Ozler. 2011. "Cash or Condition? Evidence from a Cash Transfer Experiment." <http://irps.ucsd.edu/assets/037/11365.pdf>
4. In Haiti the AGI survey is using a locally-developed screening mechanism for depression and anxiety as a control variable and a potential outcome that may be improved by the program.
5. Heckman J, J Stixrud and S Urzua. "The Effects of Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities on Labor Market Outcomes and Social Behavior." *Journal of Labor Economics* 2006 v24(3), 411-482.



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