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West Africa Adolescent Girls Summit | Monrovia, Liberia.

March 26–29, 2024. | Event Narrative Report

Dedication

This report and the impact of the second edition of the West Africa Adolescent Girls Summit 2024 is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, mother, partner, and colleague, the late Madam Rassie Bah, also known as the “Iron Lady”, the Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Advocacy and Sustainable Empowerment Sierra Leone (CASE SALONE), a Global Fund for Children’s partner, who passed away on March 3rd, 2024 at the age of 40.

Rassie’s life is an inspiration to all girls and women who are fighting for their rights and autonomy. Born into a culture where girls’ education is not prioritized and child marriage is a norm, Rassie fought to educate herself, refusing to be confined by the limitations imposed upon her gender and social status. Surviving gender-based violence, she emerged not only as a survivor but as a victor determined to achieve her full potential. She founded CASE SALONE to empower girls and women to fight for their rights, claim their freedom and autonomy, and achieve their potential. She contributed to changing the narratives for many women and girls, inspiring them to stand up for their rights and encouraging women to save and invest in the education of their daughters. She understood that true progress and long-term change can only be achieved through unity, solidarity, and collaboration. Through her unwavering commitment and visionary leadership, she inspired countless individuals to join her in the fight for gender equality, social justice, and human rights for all.

She demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication during the inaugural edition of the Adolescent Girls Summit (AGS), where she played a pivotal role in mobilizing adolescent girls participating in the CASE SALONE program. Her commitment extended beyond mere attendance, as she took on the responsibility of guiding these young girls, ensuring their active participation in both virtual and physical planning meetings. Her contributions to the first edition of AGS and planning of the second edition were immense, and her impact was tremendously felt.

Rassie’s passing leaves a void that can never be filled, but her spirit lives on in the hearts and minds of all those whose lives she touched.

“My case is different”– Her slogan.



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Acronyms

AGS	Adolescent Girls Summit
ASL	American Sign Language
AWDF	African Women Development Fund
GFC	Global Fund for Children
CASE Salone	Center for Advocacy and Sustainable Empower, Sierra Leone
CEFMU	Child Early and Forced Marriage or Union
CFN	Children Forum Network
CHI	Community Healthcare Initiative
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CTAs	Call to Actions
CYPF	Child and Youth Protection Foundation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAIECY-SL	Forum for Agriculture, Innovation, and Empowerment of Children and Youths – Sierra Leone
FGHR	Fund for Global Human Rights
FGM/c	Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting
GFM3	Génération Femme du 3ème Millènaire
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMS	Premenstrual Syndrome
PPL	People's Postcode Lottery
RFSU	The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (Riksförbundet För Sexuell Upplysning)
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UJDM	Union des Jeunes Dynamiques de Man
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund, formerly the United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WAVES	Women Against Violence and Exploitation in Society

Foreword

Remarks from Favour, 18 years, AGS 2024 Ambassador

Distinguished parents, community, religious and traditional leaders, civil society organizations, government officials, funders, private sector actors, and fellow Adolescent influencers, I am deeply honored to present this report as the Ambassador for the 2024 West Africa Adolescents Girls Summit that was held in Monrovia, Liberia from March 26–29, 2024. It was truly a privilege to be part of this gathering, where we came together to address the crucial issues facing adolescent girls, especially in our region, West Africa.

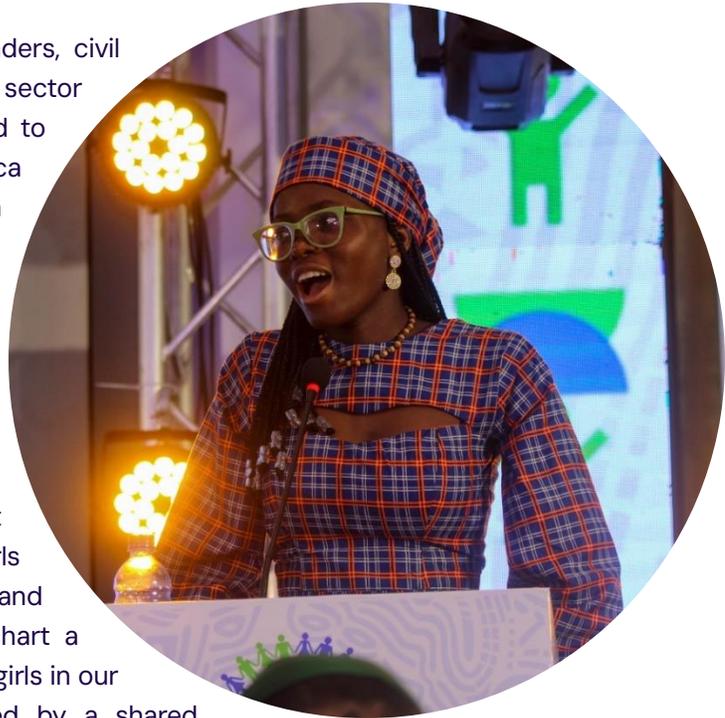
First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to every one of you for your commitment and dedication to this cause. Your support, presence at the event and in reading this report reflects your relentless commitment for the empowerment and well-being of adolescent girls. The 2024 Adolescents Girls Summit represents a crucial opportunity for us both adolescents and stakeholders to come together, share our experiences, and chart a course of action to address the challenges faced by adolescent girls in our communities. As we gathered at the event, we were guided by a shared commitment to promoting gender equality, advancing girls' rights, and ensuring that every girl can reach her full potential.

In the last few months, we have made significant strides in our advocacy efforts. From raising awareness about the importance of girls' education, health, and safety through social media to engaging with policymakers to enact meaningful change, our collective actions have already begun to make a difference in the lives of adolescent girls across our region. However, our work is far from over. Today, I call upon each of you to join me in renewing our commitment to the cause of adolescent girls' empowerment. Let us harness the momentum generated by this summit to amplify the voices of adolescent girls, advocate for their rights, and mobilize resources to support their needs.

I also urge all stakeholders reading this report – to play an active role in this important endeavor. By working together in a spirit of collaboration and partnership, we can create a more inclusive and equitable world where every girl has the opportunity to thrive.

In conclusion, the 2024 Adolescents Girls Summit was not just a gathering of individuals but a powerful movement for change. Together, let us seize this opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of adolescent girls and, in doing so, build a brighter and more equitable future for all.

Thank you.



Remarks from Ame Atsu David, Regional Co-Director Africa, Global Fund for Children

Supporting our partners in West Africa over the past four years, to centre the voices of adolescent girls aged 10–19, often firsthand victims of sexual and gender-based violence, in their programs, has been an incredibly fulfilling, rewarding, humbling, and enlightening experience. As adults, we often wrongly assume that adolescents are immature and incapable of meaningfully contribute to decision-making processes on issues affecting them due to a range of societal, cultural, and institutional factors.

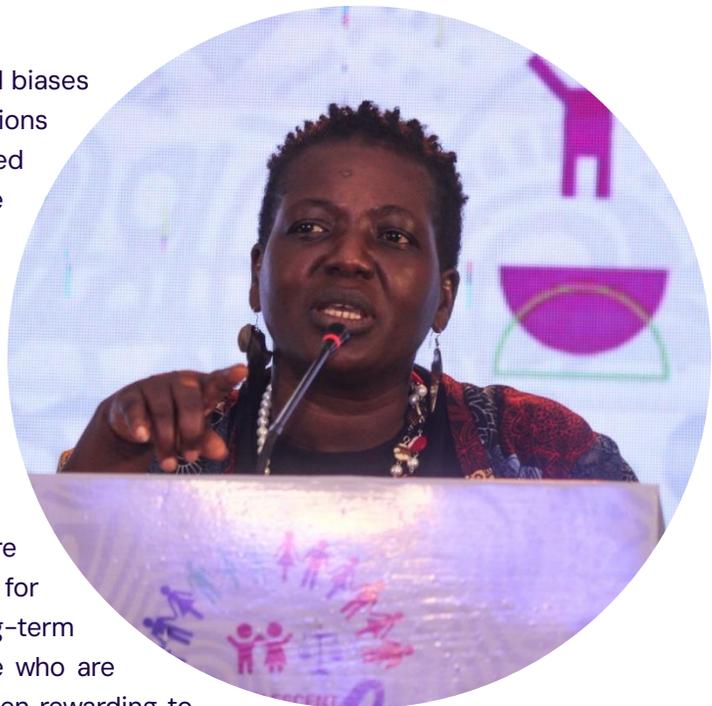
The Adolescent Girls Summit has challenged our assumptions and biases about adolescents, forcing us to confront our preconceived notions and rethink our approach to working with this often-overlooked demographic. We have learned that adolescents are not passive recipients of support or beneficiaries of interventions but active agents of change who possess a wealth of insights, experiences, and skills that deserve to be recognized and valued.

Moreover, the summit has underscored the importance of listening to adolescents and taking their perspectives into account when designing and implementing programs and policies. When they feel that their opinions matter and that they have a stake in decision-making processes, adolescents are more likely to take ownership of their own development and advocate for positive change in their communities. This leads to long-term sustainability, as young people become active agents of change who are invested in the success of interventions and programs. It has been rewarding to observe the confidence and leadership skills that have emerged as these young people realize their potential to influence outcomes and advocate for their peers.

Furthermore, the Adolescent Girls Summit has not only provided us with valuable insights into the experiences and needs of adolescent girls but has also revealed the imperative of redefining gender justice as creating inclusive spaces for both girls and boys to work together in deconstructing harmful gender norms.

Finally, one of the key insights gleaned from the past two editions of the AGS is the recognition that no single organization or actor can address the complex challenges facing adolescents alone. The 2024 Adolescent Girls Summit in particular, has been an extraordinary example of co-creation, bringing together a diverse group of adolescents from across the West Africa region, as well as representatives from the United Nations, peer organizations, local partner organizations and stakeholders. This collaborative effort has resulted in a truly inclusive and impactful summit that reflects the voices, experiences, and aspirations of adolescents from diverse backgrounds. The collaboration and partnership enabled us to pool our expertise, networks, and resources to reflect on holistic solutions that address the multifaceted needs of adolescents.

In the spirit of continuous learning and improvement, GFC remains open to feedback, reflection, and dialogue on what youth meaningful participation means and how we can better support young people in exercising their agency and contributing to a more just and equitable world. Together, let us continue to learn, grow, and evolve in our understanding and practice of meaningful participation, ensuring that young people's voices are heard and valued every step of the way.



Introduction

The West Africa Adolescent Girls Summit (AGS) is a pioneering initiative that allows adolescent girls to connect, share experiences, voice their concerns, and advocate for their rights to create a more inclusive future. It is also a space where boys join girls to dismantle harmful traditional gender norms. Unlike many conferences where young people are relegated to the periphery, the AGS places adolescent girls at the centre of the conversation. The summit is planned, organized, and facilitated by adolescent girls and boys with operational guidance from Global Fund for Children and its partners. The inaugural AGS in 2022 sparked a profound transformation among the girls who were involved in the planning and took part in the event. A comprehensive review conducted after the summit showed how the experience empowered adolescent girls who attended the summit, boosting their self-confidence, and inspiring them to pursue leadership roles and stand up for their rights. Many of them emerged as influential leaders and catalysts for positive change within their homes, schools, and communities. The AGS also enhanced the capacity of GFC partners to listen, value the experiences of adolescent girls, and believe in their capacity to lead, have agency over their lives, and be agents of change in their homes, schools, and communities.

More than just a summit, it's a powerful adolescent-led movement contributing to a gender-just world.

The second edition of the AGS held at the Farmington Hotel, Liberia, from the 26th to the 29th of March 2024 builds on the successes and accomplishments of the first by amplifying the voices of adolescent girls and boys from across the regions, creating spaces for meaningful intergenerational and policy dialogues between adolescents and stakeholders varying from religious and traditional leaders, parents and guardians, Government Institutions actors, private sector actors, Civil Society Organizations, UN Agencies, the international community in attendance.

The theme of this year's edition of the AGS, ***"Connecting Girls, Breaking Barriers, Creating Change,"*** resonates strongly with the outcomes achieved at the event. Adolescent girls and boys and young people connected with their peers from 10 West African countries in leading, planning, and executing the event and by challenging the barriers of language and disabilities to establish lasting friendships and connections to advance advocacy both in their home countries and in the West Africa region. Ultimately, the AGS 2024 empowered adolescent girls with knowledge and skills and built their confidence to shape their destinies, reach their full potential, and speak up in advocating for actions to address the issues affecting them. The Summit was attended by 250 delegates including adolescents aged 10-19, youth aged 20-25, representatives of parents traditional, religious, and community leaders, government officials, civil society organizations, and funders. It was an inclusive space with Adolescent participants from both urban and rural communities with intersecting identities including two adolescent girls with hearing impairment.

This report provides a detailed narrative of the events, sessions, activities, and learnings of the four-day event, capturing what we heard from the adolescent girls and boys, commitments made by duty-bearers, documenting the calls-to-actions from adolescent girls and boys, and lessons learned for future editions of the Adolescent Girls Summit. We invite you to read through and partake in the experiences of adolescent girls and boys at the second edition of the West African Adolescent Girls Summit.

Summit Diary

Day One – 26th March 2024

The first day of the Adolescent Girls Summit was moderated by two (2) adolescent influencers, **Favour Unoh** from Nigeria and **Francis Emmanuel Ensah** from Sierra Leone. They began the day by observing a moment of silence in honor of the late Madam Rassie Bah, Founder and former Executive Director of the Center for Advocacy and Sustainable Empowerment in Sierra Leone (CASE Salone), a partner of the Global Fund for Children, who passed away on March 3rd, 2024, at the age of 40.

Before officially opening the AGS 2024, the Global Fund for Children’s Safeguarding Lead, Victoria Ferguson, gave an insightful briefing on Safeguarding Protocols and Measures to follow throughout the summit. In her presentation, she emphasized that GFC and other partners had implemented these measures to ensure everyone was safe during the four-day event. She also encouraged adolescents to report any safeguarding concerns or anything that makes them feel unsafe to any member of the Safeguarding Committee who were identified during the session. Lastly, she sensitized the plenary to follow the code of conduct for both adolescent and adult supervisors.

Opening Ceremony

A robust display of culture, talent, beauty, and powerful speeches from adolescents and adults alike characterized the Official Opening Ceremony of the AGS 2024. The ceremony began with a lively and powerful cultural dance performed by the adolescents from Liberia, dressed in their full cultural attire, and a dance routine was performed to welcome guests and visitors according to the Liberian culture.

After the welcome performance, GFC’s Vice President of Programs, Corey Oser, gave a welcome remark. In her remarks, she expressed her gratitude to the adolescent influencers and partners whose work had put the AGS

together. She stated that the Adolescent Girls Summit is a culmination of the amazing work that community-based organizations are doing to improve the lives of girls and young women across the region.



Global Fund for Children Vice President of Programs, Corey Oser, giving the welcome speech,

The next performance was a powerful, energetic, and entertaining dance by adolescents from Cote D’Ivoire. Their performance celebrated the Ivorian culture and heritage through music and dance.



Adolescents from Cote D’Ivoire perform traditional and cultural welcome dances at the opening ceremony.

The former First Lady of Nigeria, Dr. Aisha Buhari, who could not attend physically due to health concerns, gave a resounding remark through a pre-recorded video. In her remarks, she emphasized that *“The imperative of investing in the rights and well-being of adolescent girls cannot be overstated.”* She shared how she dedicated eight years of her tenure as the First Lady of Nigeria to implementing programs aimed at promoting the education and general welfare of the girl child through the Future Assured program.



She further explained that girl-child education is a pathway to addressing the challenges that girls face, ranging from exclusion, poverty, unemployment, forced marriage, cultural norms, etc. She called for increased investment in girls' education and demanded that every girl has access to quality education. She emphasized the importance of addressing gender-based violence and demanded the creation of opportunities for girls and women to participate fully in the economy across West Africa.



UNICEF Representative to Liberia, Mr. Andy Brooks giving his opening remarks.

Subsequently, the UNICEF Representative to Liberia, Mr. Andy Brooks, gave his opening remarks. He emphasized the need for activists, civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and the government to join forces in the fight against Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV).

He also cited substantial progress that has been made in girls' education and eradicating Female Genital Mutilation while highlighting the unfinished agenda around girls' rights in the region. He ended his remarks by admonishing the importance of listening to the voices of adolescents. He acknowledged the Global Fund for Children for creating such a platform to amplify the voices of adolescent girls.



UNFPA Representative in Liberia, Ms. Bidisha Pillai giving her opening remark.

The UNFPA Country Office Representative in Liberia, Ms. Bidisha Pillai, also gave an opening remark at the AGS 2024. In her remarks, she spoke assertively on the importance of harnessing the potential of the large population of youths not only in Liberia but across the West Africa region. She expressed her pride and joy in witnessing this historic event and seeing adolescent girls and boys from across the region represented here, coming together to build their capacity, amplify their voices, and advocate for the issues that affect them.

Her Excellency Madam Jewel Howard Taylor, former Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, gave the last opening remarks on behalf of Her Excellency Katumu Yatta Boakai, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia. She spoke on the challenges faced by girls and women in Liberia, including

social and economic barriers, teenage pregnancy, harmful cultural practices like FGM/c, etc. She emphasized the responsibility of the government, parents, and adults in general to ensure that children live safe and healthy lives and grow to become today's leaders.



H.E. Madam Jewel Howard Taylor presenting the welcome remarks on behalf of the First Lady of Liberia, H.E. Katumu Yatta Boakai.

She also assertively emphasized the importance of inspiring adolescents as catalysts for positive change and the duties of persons in positions of power to ensure necessary policies are passed, implemented, and adhered to.

The opening ceremony ended with a performance of the AGS Theme Song, **Strong Girl**, led by the Adolescent Moderators. Everyone sang and danced along with the theme song.



Adolescent and youth participants dancing to the theme song.

Panel Discussion on Gender Equality and Equity: Comparative Situation Analysis of Girls and Boys in West Africa

This panel discussion aimed to create an interactive dialogue between topic experts and adolescent girls and boys, where adolescents arm them with statistics, data, and contextual information on the current situation of girls and boys in West Africa. The panel comprised Ms. Shelly N. Abdool-Zerezeghi; Bernadette Ssebadduka – UNFPA Regional Programme Specialist; Djanie Joyce Renee Ago – representative of African Women Development Fund; and H.E. Madam Jewel Howard Taylor – former Vice President of Liberia. Khalida Tamu and Omale Ojochide Joy, adolescent girls from Sierra Leone and Nigeria, respectively moderated the discussions.



Panelists on the Discussion on Gender Equality and Equity in West Africa.

During the discussion, the adolescent girls asked them about their experiences growing up as girls. The exchange revealed personal experiences of the issues that young girls face in the region, ranging from barriers to education, limited economic opportunities, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage, amongst others. H.E. Jewel Howard Taylor shared several obstacles she had to overcome in her career to get to her present position. The experts also shared about the programs and initiatives that their respective institutions are carrying out to address the issues and change the narrative that the statistics present. Through the panel discussion, it was evident that although there are similarities between the issues within the respective West African countries, the prominence of the issues differs with each country. For example, FGM/c, which is rampant and still

heavily practiced in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire, is not commonly practiced in Nigeria and other countries in the region. The session ended on the note of [messages of hope compiled by adolescent girls from the region.](#)

Celebrating Achievements in Empowering Adolescent Girls

To share and celebrate the impact made in Empowering Adolescent Girls across the region and to inspire other adolescent girls, boys, parents, communities, and civil society organizations, the AGS hosted a series of panel discussions with adolescent influencers and partner organizations who have been part of the first planning process, attended the inaugural AGS, or have developed innovated initiatives as adolescents to share their experiences with others.

Part One – Adolescent Influencers Achievements: This panel was comprised of six (5) adolescent girls and boys from the region, namely, Gitta from Sierra Leone, Flore from Guinea, Noel from Cote D'Ivoire, Professor from Sierra Leone, and Sedi from Ghana. Each one of the adolescents shared the impact of the previous Adolescent Girls Summit on their personal lives, families, and communities. Gitta shared that after she participated in the first AGS, she learned about Female Genital Mutilation, its dangers, and its implications on the lives of young girls; she went back to her grandmother, who was a leader in women practicing FGM. She convinced her late grandmother to stop the practice in her community before she passed away by educating her on the dangers. She also shared how the AGS inspired her to overcome the challenges she had experienced as a teenage mother and built her determination to further her education to give herself a better life. She is currently enrolled in high school in Lofa, Liberia. Sedi, from Ghana, shared about the organization she founded with her younger sisters at the age of 13 years in the United States of America. They fundraise to donate books to underprivileged schools in rural communities in West Africa. Flore shared how the AGS has made her to excel in her education and enhanced her leadership skills. Noel, the boy shared how the AGS has changed his perception about girls transforming him into a gender justice activist.

The key takeaway from the Adolescents Achievement was that the AGS changed their life by empowering them with the skills, confidence, and platform to speak up and advocate for their rights while also continuing to support them to become agents of change in their respective homes, schools, and communities by carrying out community-led initiatives to empower their peers with support from partner organizations and other CSOs.



Adolescent girls and boys sharing their success stories and achievements.

Part Two – Partner Organizations Achievements: This panel comprised four (4) partner organizations (CASE Salone, UJDM, GFM3, Akua Kuenyehia) and the Former Vice President of Liberia, H.E. Jewel Howard Taylor. Each panel member shared how previous Adolescent Girls Summits and similar initiatives have shaped their approach and engagement with adolescent girls and boys in their programs.



Partner Organizations and Stakeholders sharing their achievements from the previous AGS in 2022.

H.E. Jewel Howard Taylor shared about her actions due to her commitment to adolescents during the first Adolescent Girls Summit held in 2022. She shared that through her foundation, she had developed and implemented programs to improve access to education for adolescent girls in rural communities by providing scholarships and school materials. She also shared how she collaborated with the UNFPA in Liberia to improve access to sanitary pads and other sanitary items for adolescent girls in high schools nationwide.

The representative of CASE Salone, Mr. Mustapha Keita, shared how the AGS enabled the organization to improve its approach to adolescent involvement in the organization. He shared that the summit enabled them, under the leadership of the late Rassie Bah, to examine how they create space for adolescent voices to be included in their programs, interaction, and engagement within the communities where they worked.



CASE Salone Program Manager, Mr. Mustapha Keita sharing their story at AGS 2024

He mentioned that CASE Salone had developed a Teen Talk program to continue supporting and creating space for adolescent girls, and they had also created a role on their board for an Adolescent Representative to ensure that their decision-making processes reflected the voices and opinions of Adolescent girls. Akofa from Akua Kuenyehia also shared how they empower girls from early ages to old age equipping them to be active and power agents.

The key takeaway from the discussion is that the impact of the AGS on partner organizations was visible in the approach and intentional practices that partners take to

create space for and encourage active participation of adolescent girls and boys in advocating for the issues affecting them.

Special Performance of the AGS Song by Adolescents from Sierra Leone: To wrap up the celebration of achievements sessions, there was a special performance of a song written, produced, and created by adolescents from CASE Salone and WAVES in Bo, Sierra Leone. The song highlights the uniqueness of AGS and the importance of girls and boys working together to achieve gender justice. The song's music video can be found [HERE](#).



Adolescents from Sierra Leone performing the AGS Song they produced with support from CASE Salone and WAVES.

Honoring the Memory of Rassie Bah

At the end of the first day's sessions, a space was provided to honor the memory of the late Rassie Bah, who passed away on March 3rd, 2024, at the age 40. She was the founder and former executive director of the Center for Advocacy and Sustainable Empowerment in Sierra Leone (CASE Salone), a Global Fund for Children partner. Staff and colleagues from CASE Salone presented a video clip celebrating the life, impact, and achievement of the late Rassie Bah. They also solicited support from all parties present in supporting their commitment to continue the work that Rassie Bah began and to keep her dream alive.

Day Two – 27th March 2024

Gnapi Goli Patricia from Cote D'Ivoire and **Hawa Camara** from Guinea moderated the second day of the Adolescent Girls Summit. The day was a fully French-speaking day as the moderators were French speakers. This created an environment of diversity and inclusion by encouraging adolescents and other participants to interact with their peers who speak different languages.

The day began with a reminder safeguarding briefing by members of the Safeguarding Committee. Mercy Okeke from Girls Not Brides Nigeria and Akofa Bentsi-Enchill from Akua Kuenyehia Foundation Ghana provided the Safeguarding briefing. The adolescents girls and boys were reminded of the importance of safety online. Through the briefing, adolescents were invited to share their feedback, concerns, or challenges they experienced from the first day through the feedback box in the hall. The moderators also presented a video recap produced by the media team, which provided a summary of the activities, sessions, and key highlights from the summit's first day.

Keynote: Why Leadership Matters

The day's content began with a Keynote Presentation on Why Leadership Matters, delivered by Mrs. Simisola Nwogugu, President and CEO of Junior Achievements Africa. Her keynote was titled "Boundless" and focused on unlocking young people's leadership potential by educating them on key leadership traits such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, values & motivations, and defining Authentic Leadership. She opened the session and began to ask participants/adolescents who a leader is and what the most important capabilities or things a leader should have been. The keynote was very interactive and enabled adolescent girls and boys to assess their natural strengths and weaknesses, accept themselves for who they are, and understand their leadership style. She encouraged young girls to own their life experiences because they shape who they have become today and to use these experiences as a launching pad for becoming great leaders.

"I learned that as a leader, you must have the quality of self-awareness – knowing and accepting who you are before leading others. Adolescents must realize that this is their time, claim their space, recognize their power, and believe in their ability to change the world positively. I also learned that to excel, you must be ready to be uncomfortable; even when you feel tired, you must try to gather energy."

– Adolescent participant at the AGS 2024.



Adolescent participant at the AGS 2024 sharing her inputs on the conversation on girls' leadership.

Adolescents deepening their understanding of specific issues affecting girls.

A series of specialized deep-dive breakout workshops were hosted during the second day of the summit. These workshops aimed to deepen the knowledge base and understanding of specific issues affecting girls, thereby arming them with key questions for their interactions with the duty bearers and stakeholders in the following days. The workshops were hosted in English and French to ensure the utmost interaction and engagement of adolescents from all countries. Two topics were covered in simultaneous workshops, with two (2) rounds of the sessions happening in the day.

The topics covered in these workshops included:

- Child Marriage – *What is it, and why is it harmful?*
- Keeping girls in School – *Strategies to keep girls in school.*
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- Female Genital Mutilation / Cutting.

The workshops were all facilitated by technical experts from partner organizations, including UNICEF, UNFPA, Childs Not Brides, ORCHID Project, RFSU, UJDM, and GFC.

Workshop on Child Marriage – What is it, and why is it harmful? This workshop was facilitated by Mercy Okeke from Girls Not Brides. Her presentation started with introducing the broad term of Child Early and Forced Marriage or Union (CEFMU). She elaborated on the differences between Child Unions or Marriages, Early Union or Marriage, and Forced Marriage. She explained that Child Unions or Marriages are those in which one or both individuals are under 18. Early Unions or marriages are those in which one or both individuals are adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17. Forced marriage is the absence of consent; that is, the decision to marry is not full, free, or informed by the parties involved. Usually, forced marriages happen under threat or pressure (associated with contexts of vulnerability – e.g., violence, conflict). Mercy further explained that Child Marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the belief that girls and women are inferior to boys and men. It is made worse by poverty, lack of education, harmful social norms and practices, and insecurity. It's a violation of the human rights of girls, e.g., rights to education, freedom from violence, reproductive rights, access to SRH care, employment, freedom of movement, and the right to consensual marriage.

She emphasized that to address the challenge of CEFMU; girls must lead the change by understanding their rights and building agency to make informed decisions. Family and communities must transform negative social norms that limit girls' choices, therefore expanding their rights, aspirations, and choices. The government commits to gender-responsive / transformative policy changes and implementation, including budget allocation for targeted efforts to address Child Marriages.

In summary, the workshop enabled adolescents to gain an in-depth understanding of the different forms of Child

Marriage, their root causes, harms, and measures to address CEFMU and promote the rights of the girl-child. Adolescent girls and boys who were part of the session also shared their views, opinions, and experiences on the topic of child marriage.



Adolescent participant at the AGS 2024 sharing her inputs on the conversation on child marriage.

Keeping Girls in School – Strategies to keep girls in school: This workshop was simultaneously available in English and French. They were facilitated by technical experts from UNICEF and GFC partner UJDM from Cote D'Ivoire. This session aimed at fostering discussion and understanding of the importance of girl-child education, challenges or barriers stopping girls from getting an education, and the possible solutions to keep girls in school. From the discussions, it was identified that some of the challenges or barriers to girls' education are rooted in poverty, harmful social norms and practices, violence, and inequality. The recommendation from this session includes making school more accessible, secure, and adapted to the needs of girls. Additionally, the girls recommended investments in the elimination of harmful practices like child marriage.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education: The UNFPA Regional Program Specialist, Madam Bernadette Ssebadduka, facilitated this workshop along with RFSU representative, Aminata Kamara. She made the session an interactive dialogue where adolescents responded to questions by sharing their thoughts and ideas on key topics while the facilitator filled in the gaps where necessary. The

questions asked were: *What does CSE aim to achieve? What are the challenges to accessing and implementing CSE? What is being done at different levels to promote CSE, and what can adolescents do to implement CSE?*

She went further to break down the key terms involved in CSE. She explained that Sex was defined in biology as being male or female. Gender is how the society expects us to behave as male or female. She explained that sex and gender are not the same. Sex is also a word people use when they talk about sexual intercourse. She explained that Sexuality involves sensuality (our senses, feelings, touch, smell, etc.) and that Sexual and Reproductive Health involves the attitudes, behaviors, and consequences of our sexual interactions with others.

- It should be scientifically accurate, based on research with evidence.
- It should be based on human rights.
- It should be incremental doses, i.e., with new information building upon previous learning.
- It should be curriculum-based.
- It should be age- and developmentally appropriate.
- It should be culturally relevant and context appropriate.
- It should support learners' empowerment by improving their life skills.
- It should address all relevant topics such as puberty, menstruation, reproduction, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth, STIs/HIV, GBV, and harmful practices, including child marriage, FGM/c, etc.

In response to the question: *"What does CSE aim to achieve?"* the facilitators shared that the ultimate goal of CSE is that all young people get CSE early enough to enable them to make informed choices about their health, on their terms, responsibly, and respectfully throughout their lives.

"CSE prepares young people for a safe, productive, fulfilling life in a world where preventable conditions like gender-based violence, unintended pregnancies, HIV, etc. pose serious risk to their health."



UNFPA Regional Program Specialist, Madam Bernadette Ssebadduka, leading the session on Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

The facilitators asked the question: *"Where do adolescents and young people learn about sexuality issues?"* Some participants responded to the question by mentioning their sources of sex education as their parents, friends, neighbors, aunties, sisters, teachers, social media, grannies, uncles, etc. The facilitators explained that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. They presented the elements of CSE, which includes the following:

- CSE can be delivered in school or out of school.
- It should be comprehensive and not one-off lessons.

In response to the question: *"What is it challenging to get CSE?"* Adolescents shared that some challenges to getting CSE are the many misconceptions that people have related to sex education. People believe that when young get CSE, it will lead to early sexual initiation.

Gender-Specific Spaces

Separate gender-specific spaces were provided at the Adolescent Girls Summit. These spaces were designed to empower both genders with specialized messaging that enables behavioral changes and improved interactions, demonstrating that girls and boys can work together to create gender equality.

Girls Only Space: What Would You Do? Card Game: This space was designed and facilitated by She's The First, an organization based in Kenya. "What Would You Do?" is a play-based toolkit for mentors, featuring a card game designed with and for girls in three age groups. Through play and conversation amongst peers and a mentor, girls will explore the building blocks of healthy relationships and strategies for creating safe personal boundaries. The games are designed to empower girls with the knowledge and skills to shift the power dynamics between adults, men, and boys in homes and schools. With the card game, girls respond differently to various situations with people in their lives and ultimately choose the best possible response. The recommendation from this session arose calling for organizations working with adolescent girls to adopt the right tools like the "What would you do? Card game" to facilitate interactions with adolescent girls and for the tools to be available in different languages. GFC made efforts to provide our partners working in West Africa with the tools from ShesTheFirst to support their interaction with adolescent girls in their programs.



ShesTheFirst Program Assistant sharing the "What Would You Do?" card game with adolescent girls in the Girls Only space. From Left to Right, Isha and Khadija from Sierra Leone.



The "What would you do?" Card game toolkits along with other materials were distributed to GFC partners and peer organizations present at the AGS to support them to continue supporting the adolescent girls in their programs.

Boys Only Space: Healthy Masculinity for Boys: This space was provided in French and English. Bundie Kabanze and Kolawole Olatosimi facilitated the English-speaking space from the Global Fund for Children, while Ramanou Babaedjou Moboladji facilitated the French-speaking space. The sessions created a space for adolescent boys and other adult men present to reflect on their life experiences. The sessions began with the facilitators asking the boys, "What does it mean to be a man?" Participants shared their responses by identifying key beliefs concerning what made them a man. These beliefs ranged from financial prowess, physical strength, multiple wives, hard work, no emotions, athletic, provider, protector, and many more.

The facilitators further asked the boys and men to identify the sources of these beliefs about what makes them men. The sources identified included parents, teachers, uncles, mothers, culture, traditional, television, movies, social media, self-reflection, and peers. Afterward, the boys and men reflected and identified their accepted and rejected beliefs. In summary, this session introduced the concept of healthy masculinity and its importance in enabling men to change their perspectives and harmful beliefs about how they should interact with women and girls in society. The recommendation from this session highlighted the importance of healthy masculinity as an integral part of gender justice programming. Adolescent girls have demanded the inclusion of boys in the planning and execution of the adolescent girls' summit and with the healthy masculinities session, it was clear that there must be clear messages and exemplary engagements for boys' involvement. GFC has opted to provide the necessary technical support to our partners in the region to integrate healthy masculinities for boys in their programming within the region.

Day Three – 28th March 2024

The third day was moderated by **Joy Aniah** from Ghana and **John Fatorma Yamba** from Sierra Leone. This day was focused on intergenerational dialogues between adolescents and relevant stakeholders, building their knowledge and capacity on key topics and creating a platform to share their thoughts and opinions with relevant stakeholders. The day also served as a preparation for the advocacy with high-level dignitaries on the summit's last day. Before the day's session, to promote inclusion and interaction, a member of the organization All4All, based in Sierra Leone, which works with people living with disabilities, taught the participants a few words in sign language like how to say Hello, introduce themselves, and applaud in sign language. This created a welcoming environment for the adolescent girls with hearing impairment at the AGS.

Keynote from AWDF – Why is it important to fund adolescent-led initiatives?

To kick off the day's content, Djanie Joyce Renee Ago, the African Women Development Fund (AWDF) representative, gave a keynote speech titled "Why it is important to fund adolescent-led initiatives." During her speech, she introduced the African Women Development Fund and its purpose of resourcing, supporting, and nurturing African women's rights organizations and feminist movements to sustain themselves.



AWDF Representative, Djanie Joyce Renee Ago, giving her keynote at the AGS.

She also shared how the AWDF was extremely proud to fund and be involved in organizing the Adolescent Girls Summit. The AWDF is always interested in supporting programs and initiatives led by and designed for adolescent girls. She emphasized that she has learned so much from the adolescents who have boldly and eloquently presented their stories to advocate for their rights, and she continues to learn from partners such as the Global Fund for Children on creating spaces for truly adolescent-led convenings.

Intergenerational and Policy Dialogues

The intergenerational and policy dialogues were seven (7) simultaneous spaces created to foster interaction between adolescents, technical experts, and duty-bearers on various topics related to the issues that affect them. The dialogues enabled the adolescents to speak up and advocate using the knowledge they had acquired from the previous days and their personal experiences as young people. The topics covered in the dialogues were:

- Interactions with parents and community leaders regarding norms, culture, and traditions.
- Interactions with the Ministries of Education and others on Girls Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- Interaction with the Ministries of Health and others on access to SRHR adolescent services.
- Interaction with Donors and Funders on Access to Funding for adolescent-led initiatives
- Interaction with Private Sector on Economic Empowerment for Adolescent Girls
- Interaction with Civil Society Organizations on Meaningful Engagements with Adolescents
- Interact with UN agencies on the role of regional and international institutions.

These dialogues were organized in mixed and single-language options, and adolescents could choose the most interesting topics.

Access to Funding for adolescent-led initiatives: This interaction was primarily moderated by Sedinam from Ghana and Augusta from Sierra Leone. The session had representatives from donor organizations and funders, including the Global Fund for Children, African Women Development Fund, Plan International, Action Aid Liberia, RFSU, the Swedish Embassy in Liberia, and Girls First Fund. During the interaction, the moderators posed pre-prepared questions to the organizations present. Adolescents in the sessions also voiced their concerns and challenges they had experienced as activists trying to create change in their communities.

The challenges that adolescents posed that restricted their access to funding included:

- Donors or Funders do not trust adolescents to manage the funds they receive effectively.
- There are too many technical and unrealistic requirements to qualify for funding.
- Lengthy and complicated reporting tools that shift focus from the impact of our work to more administrative processes.
- No additional capacity-building support provided by donors to strengthen adolescent-led initiatives.
- Donor preferences are always aimed at established adult-led organizations with multiple years of experience who operate at national levels but often ignore small community-based adolescent and youth-led groups that create real changes in the lives of women and girls.



Representative of the Swedish Embassy, Dwede Tarpeh interacting with Adolescents

In addition, representatives from the Children Forum Network in Sierra Leone, an adolescent-led group that focuses on creating awareness, education, and advocacy at community and school levels in rural parts of Sierra Leone, shared how the Global Fund for Children had placed their trust in funding them through flexible and capacity-building grants which have contributed to the growth of the institution. They invited other donors to learn from this approach and adopt similar ways of working with adolescent and youth-led groups to build trust and create change.

"We do not need an age criterion to create change. Adolescents-led initiatives can create impact just as well as adults, we need you to put your trust in us just as GFC has done with CFN."

~ Stanley Swaray, CFN Sierra Leone.

In response to the adolescents' questions and challenges, the donors in the session provided some clarification and recommendations to the adolescents to address the challenges they face. Some of these recommendations included:

- Adolescent-led initiatives should develop programs and projects that support women and girls in improving their income sources. Programs such as microloans, livelihoods, car wash, or other initiatives that could generate revenue for adolescent-led groups are more sustainable than donor funds.
- Community-based initiatives tend to instill a mindset of dependency on community members, who rely on NGOs or donor funds to solve all their problems. Funders are more likely to fund initiatives demonstrating a deviation from this problem by empowering the community to take ownership in solving its problems.
- Funders agree that the restrictions and requirements to qualify for funding may be challenging. Still, they are put in place to ascertain the organization's capacity to handle programs with limited support effectively.

- Lastly, funders encourage adolescents to invest time in networking and building relationships with organizations. Find out the sources of the funds your donors or funders receive. It may be useful to communicate directly with the source. For example, Plan International may receive funding from the Global Fund for Human Rights and may provide grants for youth and adolescent-led organizations. It is important to know who the funders are funding your funders. It is also encouraged to communicate with the root funders where necessary.

Girls Education and CSE: This session was Moderated by Tina and Tity for English speaking with support from Beatrice and Faith/Eniola. The panel in this session comprised representatives from the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone and Liberia. During the session, adolescents presented the challenges they have experienced when accessing Comprehensive Sexuality Education in their respective countries. The challenges shared were:

- In Liberia, there is a total lack of education about CSE for adolescent girls both at home and in schools.
- In Nigeria, there is a lack of skilled and competent teachers to educate people on CSE. Parents also need to learn about CSE as they lack education, and there is a generally higher rate of illiteracy surrounding CSE, especially in rural parts of Nigeria.
- In Sierra Leone, CSE education for adolescent girls living with disabilities was not available. Sign language teachers in schools are unavailable to teach CSE.
- Generally, the majority of adolescent girls, especially in rural communities across the region, do not get the opportunity to go to school or are dropping out due to challenges of funds, poverty, or to cater to house chores.

The recommendations from this interaction included the need for government institutions to support less privileged adolescent girls through scholarships and cash transfers to eradicate poverty. Adolescents also recommended that government institutions construct more schools in every

community, especially in rural areas, equip these schools with trained and qualified teachers, and train teachers in sign language (ASL) to make education more accessible for girls living with disabilities. The government was also recommended to provide free learning and education for girls with disabilities.



Representative of UNICEF interacting with Adolescents on Keeping Girls in School and access to Education.

Economic Empowerment for Adolescents: This session was focused on facilitating interaction between adolescent girls and boys, and the private sector institutions present at the AGS. The lead presenter for this session was the CEO of Junior Achievements Africa (JA-Africa). Her presentation was focused on the topic of Entrepreneurship. She began by asking the Adolescents "Who is an entrepreneur?" Entrepreneurs are businesspeople who aim to create value and solve problems by providing goods and services that customers are willing to pay money for. She also discussed the challenges faced by entrepreneurs including:

- Capital (financial problem): Funds or Money invested into the business venture.
- Geographical location: Premises where the goods and services will be produced.
- Lack of Business Idea: Some entrepreneurs lack the technical idea and understanding to run a successful business.
- Discouragement from family members and society at certain points.

Through the interaction, adolescents also asked the question: "**How can I raise money as an adolescent?**" Some of the ideas shared include:

- Individual Income: Adolescents can raise income through personal ventures or businesses they can establish within their communities.
- Family and Friends: Adolescents can also raise income from their family members such as their fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, siblings, cousins, etc. They can also raise income from their friends and their peers.
- Banks: Adolescents may also raise income through the banks. Some banks have services and initiatives that encourage adolescents and young people to raise income by saving and investing with the Bank.
- NGOs: Adolescents who are part of NGO programs can also raise income through the NGO programs. they may receive stipends, transportation reimbursements, or other financial benefits.
- Investors: Adolescents can also raise income from investors by establishing innovative entrepreneurship ventures that local and international investors can invest in to make a profit.

The adolescents asked the presenter another question: "**How can I be successful in a business as an adolescent?**" Some of the ideas shared in the session are:

- Create a Business Plan: A business plan is an overall plan that covers the different aspects of the business from the idea, marketing, promotion, production, sales, and financial components of the business.
- Calculate your profit and expenditure: For a business to succeed, you must be able to track your business income and expenditure to calculate how much profit you are making.
- Convince investors, NGOs, or Banks to buy your idea: Successful businesses do not rely on individual income alone, you must convince other sources of income such as investors, banks, or NGOs to buy into your business idea and invest more income.

- Create innovative ideas and do your own business with quality to attract standards: Business success also relies on innovation. Adolescents must develop innovative approaches for their businesses and ensure quality standards for their goods and services. The better your product quality, the more customers you attract.

The recommendations from this interaction included the following:

- The need for the establishment of Free trade in Africa for adolescent-led businesses,
- the establishment of financial support mechanisms for adolescents' business ideas,
- the creation of a special platform for adolescents to display their business ideas and get support, and
- Partnership and support from government institutions towards adolescent business ideas.

Interactions with Civil Society Organizations: This session was focused on facilitating discussions between civil society organizations and adolescent girls and boys. The discussion was lead by representatives from GFC partners in Liberia and Sierra Leone, CHI and CASE Salone respectively. Mustapha Keita, Program Manager represented CASE Salone while Aisha F. Farkollie, Program Officer represented CHI. During their interactions, the discussion was centered on creating meaningful engagement for adolescent girls and boys in programs with civil society organizations.

The sessions began with the facilitators introducing themselves and presenting their organization's work and programs with adolescent girls. CASE Salone shared about their Teen Talk program where they host weekly meetings with adolescent girls from rural communities and educate them on a range of different topics comprising Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Teenage Pregnancy, and Menstrual Hygiene amongst others. The Teen Talk program was a great example of creating spaces for the meaningful participation of adolescents in NGO programs.

The Adolescents in the session also had the opportunity to ask some critical questions about their experience working with and interacting with Civil Society Organizations in their respective countries.

Interactive Capacity Building Breakout Sessions

Like the intergenerational dialogues, the interactive capacity-building breakout sessions were designed to empower adolescents with in-depth knowledge and understanding of key areas of interest. The adolescents requested these spaces and were provided simultaneously where each participant could choose to attend the most interesting breakout. The topics covered in the breakout were:

- Adolescent Mental health and well-being facilitated by The Carter Center Liberia.
- Using Social Media for Advocacy facilitated by CASE Salone, Achievers Ghana, and UNICEF.
- Peer Pressure Management and drug abuse prevention facilitated by CYPF.
- Human Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion facilitated by Plan International, GFC, Action Aid Liberia, and WAVES.
- Managing changes during adolescence facilitated by CHI, RFSU, and UNICEF.
- Climate change and young people facilitated by FGHR and FAIECY.

Through these in-depth workshops, adolescent girls and boys were empowered with the knowledge and understanding with which they drafted the Calls-to-Action to be presented to relevant stakeholders the next day.



Adolescents Mental Health and well-being discussion facilitated by the Carter Center Liberia.

Remarks from Her Excellency Madam Josephine Nkrumah, the Resident Representative of the President of the ECOWAS

On the third day of the summit, Her Excellency Madam Josephine Nkrumah, the Resident Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Liberia, graced the afternoon session with her presence.



ECOWAS Resident Representative giving her remarks and passing her message at the AGS.

In her remarks, Madam Nkrumah shared her resilience journey in a stirring address, offering a powerful narrative of triumph over adversity. Through her inspirational words, she underscored the significance of perseverance and self-belief in surmounting obstacles, imparting valuable lessons to the attentive audience of adolescent girls. Her presence not only lent credence to the summit's objectives but also reaffirmed ECOWAS's unwavering commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of adolescent girls throughout the region. By actively engaging in such initiatives, ECOWAS reaffirmed its pivotal role in fostering solidarity, promoting gender equality, and nurturing the potential of West Africa's youth. Her remarks inspired the recommendation for organizations to strengthen their advocacy at the national level by working with ECOWAS at the regional level to pressure the governments of member countries to enact and implement laws and policies that address the issues affecting adolescent girls and boys within the region.

Day Four – 29th March 2024

The fourth day of the summit was moderated by **Omale Joy** from Nigeria and **Professor William Mattia** from Sierra Leone. Being the last day of the AGS, the day was focused on culminating the voices, opinions, and demands of the adolescents, presenting the call-to-actions to the stakeholders and duty-bearers present, and amplifying the demands of the adolescent girls through the media. The day began with a video recap of the previous day, with adolescents sharing their key lessons learned from the intense breakouts and in-depth workshops from the previous days.

Mohammed Kamara provided the day's safeguarding briefing from Plan International. During his briefing, he expressed his excitement and pride for being part of the AGS. He also highlighted that although a tour was planned for the day to Monrovia today, he encouraged adolescents to be safe as measures had been implemented to guarantee their safety.

Consolidation of Call-to-Actions (CTAs)

There was a working session to consolidate the demands into a presentable document. The consolidation was facilitated by the partners from CYPF and s, represented by Kolawole Olatosimi and UNICEF representative, Shelly N. Abdool-Zerezeghi. Adolescent girls and boys were placed in working groups at their respective tables and tasked with developing key demands or actions to present to the different categories of stakeholders and duty-bearers. Each table was asked to present their demands to the plenary and consolidated to create the final Call-to-Actions of the AGS 2024.

Space for National Stakeholders to share their learnings from the Summit

The first dialogue was a panel discussion with the cultural and traditional leaders who had traveled from other West African countries, specifically, Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivoire,

and Guinea, to attend the AGS 2024. They had listened keenly to the adolescents sharing their concerns and discussing the issues and were now given the opportunity to share their reflections, learnings, and feedback to the demands of the adolescent girls and boys.



Stakeholders to share their learnings from the interactions at the AGS

During this dialogue, some reflections shared by the cultural and traditional leaders include:

"After participating in the four days of activities, I have learned these through you as adolescents and our partners as collaborators. We have noticed the strong involvement of adolescent girls and boys; this builds trust in us for this platform. We also noticed the networking between different structures and organizations you presented at this summit. This also helps us and adolescents learn, and we believe it will contribute to the personal development of your future. For us involved in protection, we have also learned from colleagues from other countries how to fight against gender-based violence and other aspects of our work."

"At the beginning of the AGS, we started with the impact of the past summit and how it contributed to building adolescent leadership. We also appreciate that one of our adolescent sisters traveled from the United States to establish another NGO to help adolescents, and even her parents were in support; that was also another example of adolescent leadership and self-confidence. What we have learned from the AGS is how to achieve our goals, in the social aspect, in communities, and how we change our communities so adolescents can have the right place for them."

"From our involvement here at the AGS, we now know that there are some things we are missing when it comes to supporting the girls in our communities. What we have learned is to give them the platform in decision-making. We have understood that in the communities' government or leadership, the girls' voices and opinions must be reflected in decision-making. We need to go out for consultation with the adolescent girls. Our key mandate is in all citizens' development, well-being, and safety. By involving and consulting young girls, we can ensure that our decisions reflect the issues that adolescent girls are facing in our communities and our countries, especially in Education and Healthcare."

Presentation of Call-to-Actions to Stakeholders



Cross-section of the representatives of stakeholders who received the Call-to-actions presentation.

The adolescent spokespersons presented the consolidated calls-to-action to the panel members representing each category of stakeholder or duty bearer to whom the calls were addressed. The panel comprised the Former Vice President of Liberia, H.E. Madam Jewel Howard Taylor, Mr. John Kabia from the Fund for Global Human Rights, Mr. Charles Lawrence from UNFPA, Mr. Meamin Souleyman GBATO, a Traditional Chief from Houphouet-ville community, Cote D'Ivoire, Mr. Peter Kanneh Abdulai from the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone, and Madam Hannah Yambasu, Executive Director of WAVES in Sierra Leone.

Call-to-action to the Governments of West African Countries:

- Take proactive steps to educate citizens on the negative consequences of female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC), and adopt/implement laws banning the practice in different countries in West Africa.
- Provide free medical products to support adverse Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) in addition to the provision of free sanitary pads to girls to keep them in public/private schools before and during their menstrual periods.
- Work with the legislature and other government stakeholders to pass /implement the law on Gender Equality for improved gender equality in society.
- Harmonise policies and policy provisions amongst the different gender and child-related policies, e.g., the provisions of the Child Rights Policy, including implementing and enforcing the policies and laws that protect adolescent girls.
- Set up policies and structures so adolescents/youth representatives can participate in and be appointed to governance, policy-making, and decision-making positions, especially those related to adolescent girls' issues.
- Put in place policies to guide CSO/Community leaders in dealing with children's affairs, including abolishing customary law of child marriage and other harmful laws.
- Provide WASH facilities for schools, such as water and adequate toilets.
- Put in place essential protection policies regarding the safety of adolescent girls' sanity and safety.
- Build schools in the different communities to avoid long-distance walking, provision of transport facilities to government schools,
- Recruit trained and qualified teachers for better learning in public schools and increase public school teachers' salaries to motivate them to teach.
- Implement favourable laws for adolescents to eradicate female genital cutting/mutilation, child marriage, all forms of gender-based violence and reduce teenage pregnancy.

- Improve education in rural areas by providing uniforms, teacher training, etc.
- Build more schools for persons with disabilities (schools for the deaf) and provide sponsorship for girls, especially girls whose parents cannot afford their fees to high schools and universities.
- Integrate and train teachers in Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools, including teachers for children with disabilities. CSE should be a special subject in schools, and teachers should be trained on how to teach this subject.
- Invest in the health and well-being of girls.
- Invest in safe spaces for girls, such as girls' clubs and other safe spaces where girls can learn, share experiences, and support one another.
- Train more teachers in Sign Language (ASL).



Adolescent spokesperson, Orlane (18) from Benin, presented the CTAs to the Governments of West African countries.

Call-to-action to Civil Society Organizations including the Media:

- Continue to collaborate with young girls both in and out of school such that they are empowered in every aspect to pursue their full potential and fulfill their rights.
- Continue to support the awareness and advocacy against female genital cutting, child marriage, and forced marriage.
- Support adolescent girls to amplify their voices to end SGBV and to popularize laws and policies.

- Create a space for adolescents and their parents to interact.
- Develop flexible organization standards for adolescents to reach and get into CSOs (in volunteering and internship positions). This will be opportunities for adolescent mentorship and participation in decision-making.
- Support safe spaces for adolescents to discuss their issues freely.
- Provide Sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) services, including menstrual hygiene service, contraceptives, and mental health for adolescents.
- Support children and adolescent advocacy to build a network to advance their work.
- Increase focus on rural settings when implementing programs.
- Keep raising awareness and implementing project actions to address social and cultural norms that discriminate against girls.
- Advocate for policies that promote the health and well-being of girls, such as life skills training and economic empowerment programs.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to create opportunities for adolescents' empowerment and meaningful engagement in civil society.
- Involve more persons with disability in programs, as well as increase capacity Strengthening for them to know, exercise, and advocate for their rights.
- Empower adolescent girls to know their rights and the laws.
- Involve adolescents in their activities and provide capacity-building training for them.
- Advocate for the government to allocate funds to the various ministries dealing with children's and women's affairs and the local organizations implementing adolescent-centered projects.

Call-to-action to School Administration and Education Institutions:

- Stop excluding girls from governance or education due to pregnancy and menstruation.

- Stop all forms of sexual harassment of girls in schools.
- Provide sanitary pads and clean water and toilets.



Adolescent spokesperson, Favour (19) from Nigeria, presenting the CTAs to Civil Society Organizations and School Administration.

- Support efforts to address social and cultural norms.
- Give more resources to organizations that promote the rights of persons with disabilities.
- More funding for AGS will enable more girls to connect and collectively advocate.

Call-to-action to Parents and Caregivers:

- Listen to adolescents and work together to stop violence and human rights abuse.
- Create a safe, conducive, and supportive environment for adolescents to flourish and live productive lives free of discrimination and promote gender equity.
- Parents should stand up and speak up for their children on other for others to take them seriously.
- Educate their children on important things, such as age-appropriate sexuality education, rather than unimportant things.
- Support adolescents in seeking education at the highest level.
- Stop compromising on any violence against children, e.g., rape, early marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and ensure that the appropriate justice is delivered.
- Partner with/work with the government and CSO to ensure adolescents, girls, and women are safe and protected from all forms of violence.
- Should not prioritize the rights of one child over the other.
- The consent, opinion, decisions, and personal interests of our children and adolescents be considered and respected.
- Ensure girls have access to quality education, health services, and economic opportunities.

Call-to-action to Funders and Donors:

- Provide flexible, easy-to-access funding for adolescents or young women-led organizations.
- Provide funds to support adolescent girls, such as providing sanitary pads.
- Simplify their methods for calls for proposals (make it easy, less complicated, and accessible to young people or youth-led organizations).
- Give adolescents opportunities to present their programming ideas and funding to support their own programs and projects directly.
- Invest more into adolescent initiatives so that their donations to the work of humanity can be impactful in making a positive change in the world.
- Conduct follow-up visits to funded NGOs and locations to ensure that resources are used for the intended purpose(s) for accountability.
- Provide capacity-building training for adolescent-led initiatives and for them to access funding for these initiatives.
- Support organizations working with adolescents to enhance their digital advocacy capacity.
- Invest in programs that empower girls and help them reach their full potential.

Call-to-action to Community Leaders:

- Work together seeking the welfare and protection of adolescents such as drugs abuse, rape, sexual based violence).

- Engage with community leaders to model positive masculinities to boys and mentorship.
- Include persons with disability in community-based activities and decision-making processes, for them to feel the sense of belonging in the society.
- More engagement and awareness on harmful cultural practices from community leaders to the community and take action to work together to protect the rights of every child and adolescents.
- Encourage a favorable environment/support for CSOs to conduct community awareness on FGM/C and other harmful practices.
- Advocate for the needs of adolescents.
- Make byelaws regarding the protection of children, and gender-equitable byelaws in the communities.
- Community leadership should set up laws that make children with disabilities feel safe and respected. Provide support for children with disability to attend school.
- Mandate parents to send children with disabilities to school.

- The UN should design strategies that allow youth to attend sessions with governments.
- Regional institutions should follow up with States on implementing national laws and policies for the best interest of children, adolescents, and youth.

Call-to-action to International Non-governmental Organizations (iNGOs):

- Continue to provide a platform for adolescents to share ideas on different issues affecting them and solutions to tackle harmful traditional practices, such as continuous funding for the AGS and other opportunities for adolescents to visit and learn from other contexts.
- Support governments in including CSE in school education curricula.
- Provide more unrestricted funding to local organizations.
- Invest more in project implementation in rural areas, where girls are most at risk of the harmful cultural and traditional practices identified.
- Invest in free sexual reproductive health services such as free condoms, sanitary pads, contraceptives, and medication for pre-menstrual symptoms.
- Provide support to educational attainment by:
 - Sponsoring the establishment of libraries in public schools to enable girls and boys to improve their reading skills.
 - Provide education sponsorship (and scholarships) for adolescents, especially those in rural areas and underprivileged girls. to support higher education attainment and completion (if possible, in other countries),
- Support the involvement and inclusion of adolescents in law-making processes and activity implementation in the countries they support/work in.
- Advocate to the government for swift dispensation of justice for perpetrators of violence against girls and women.



Adolescent spokesperson, Habie (17) from the Gambia, presenting the CTAs to the Funders, Donors, and iNGOs.

Call-to-action to the United Nations and Regional Institutions:

- The UN should follow up on the funding for government institutions.

- Support local organizations to or, where possible, provide technical capacity sessions for adolescent and/or youth-led organizations in relevant areas.
- Support strong policy development and program planning to protect the rights of children and adolescents, such as the inclusion of the elimination of all forms of FGM in the Child Rights Act and fostering shared learning amongst countries with similar issues.
- Create future workshops, summits, and platforms for youth as adolescent influencers transition from adolescent to youth.
- Exercise their responsibility to enforce laws that protect children's and adolescents' rights.
- Provide awareness of issues that affect adolescents within the communities.
- Support the establishment of rehabilitation centers for adolescents.
- Address the issue of drugs and provide constant counseling through guidance and counseling centers in schools and communities.

- Create a special platform for adolescents to display their business ideas and provide technical and financial support to adolescents with innovative business ideas.
- Provide scholarships, as part of their corporate social responsibilities, to disadvantaged Adolescents who cannot pursue their education because of lack of economic.

Call-to-action for Boys:

- Change their mindsets about girls and advocate for equal rights.
- Educate other boys on the rights of girls.
- Always support girls.
- Be willing to share power with girls and stop the practice of superiority to girls.
- Advocate on behalf of girls everywhere they find themselves.
- Give space for girls to take the lead.
- Respect girls' opinions and treat them equally and with respect.
- Be involved in conversations on issues relating to girls and practice healthy masculinity.
- Support girls in taking active roles in society.
- Sensitize and raise awareness on issues affecting girls.

Call-to-action for Girls:

- Believe in yourself.
- Know their rights, speak up for and protect your rights.
- Support one another.
- Give boys the opportunity to engage with them, as well as advocate for them on their issues as well.
- Educate other girls on their rights.

Call-to-action for Private Sector Institutions:

- Organize free trade in Africa for adolescents (context to be further explained)



Adolescent spokesperson, Augusta (18) from Sierra Leone, presenting the CTAs to Private Sector Actors, Adolescent Boys and Girls.

Capturing Key Learnings from AGS 2024

To capture the learning of the AGS on participants and listen to their feedback Global Fund for Children developed and managed a comprehensive learning and documentation plan. The plan included a survey of all participants, daily debrief meetings with organizations and partners involved in planning the event and learning circles with adolescents and partners who were attending the AGS as participants. The purpose of the plan was to document learnings and identify possible improvements that could be made both during this AGS and in future summits.

What Adolescents and Youth are Taking Away from the Summit:

- *"I learned that human rights are God-given rights that every human being is born with, for example, the right to life – nobody can take it away from you, a right to be an educated person."*
- *"I learned about Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) which includes so many things such as Female Genital Mutilation and Menstrual Hygiene Management. We should be taught these topics in school and by our parents."*
- *"I learned that girls' education is important and that to be a leader, you must have the quality of self-awareness."*
- *"I learned about CSE, SGBV, menstrual health management, and the importance of keeping girls in school."*
- *"The summit is excellent, wonderful, educational, and inspiring. I learned a lot; this is my first time attending an educational summit like this. The few important things I have learned from this summit are CSE, FGM, and how to become a leader. The most important one I learned, and I am happy about, is the practice of FGM because my mom almost initiated me. Thank God I am now informed and educated about it."*
- *"I have learned a lot of new things like communicating with those from different countries, learning new languages, making new friends, networking, and most importantly, knowing yourself as an individual."*
- *"My experience was good overall. The summit was an amazing, educative, inspiring, and above all, life-changing experience. I saw adolescents taking responsibility without being told and they are up to the task. There is that sign of maturity as compared to the last summit."*
- *"I learned that as a leader, you must have the quality of self-awareness – knowing and accepting who you are before leading others. Adolescents must realize that this is their time, claim their space, recognize their power, and believe in their ability to change the world positively. I also learned that to excel, you must be ready to be uncomfortable; even when you feel tired, you must try to gather energy."*
- *"I learned about CSE, its importance, and its impact on adolescent girls. I also learned a new language – Sign language."*
- *"My experience at the AGS was nice and interactive. I was able to meet new young and vibrant minds while also learning a new culture."*
- *"I loved the session on human rights; it helped me to know what my rights are and what privilege is."*
- *"I'm so grateful to have been selected by my peers to come to the summit. From the experience, I loved and learned a lot about FGM, the rights of Girls, educating the girl child, etc. I just love everything! Thank you, AGS, for making me a better person."*
- *"I learned how FGM is affecting girls, especially because in my country, we do not experience FGM, so I did not know what other girls were experiencing. I also learned about how the rights of girls matter most"*

because other girls are being treated poorly because of several issues. I will try my possible best to advocate for gender equality."

- *"I had a great experience at the summit, learned new things, and met new people. I could share my thoughts, network with different people, and make new friends. Thanks to everyone who planned this summit and I hope that this will continue."*
- *"I learned about CSE, this is the most important thing that I learned because it was my first time getting to know about it. I also learned about leadership, how to be a good leader and self-awareness."*
- *"My experience at the summit was a wonderful one, the comfort, the food, and most of all, the various sessions. I learned a lot from the panel discussions on the difficulties adolescents face and how they can be eradicated. My best of all the sessions is the Female Genital Cutting session, I understood that it is very dangerous to our health and it even causes death."*
- *"I learned a lot of things from the networking and participation. Particularly, the engagement with stakeholders make me feel our voices have been heard."*
- *"I learned so many things at the summit. I learned that early marriage is not good for Adolescents, I learned that sex below the age of 18 is not good, I learned that when you are a leader, you should be honest because if you don't know one will listen to you."*
- *"I had a very good experience during the social media advocacy and the keeping girls in school sessions. I have learned the value of social media and the purposes of keeping girls in school."*
- *"I learned new skills like robotics and talents. I also learned about the effects of child marriage, the importance of comprehensive sexuality education, and how one can become a media advocate for adolescents."*
- *"The discussion on child marriage, the stories that the dignitaries shared, and the session on mental health and wellbeing for adolescents were the highlights of the AGS for me. I like all these activities because they were interactive and also they summarized the content, making it easy to understand by using stories."*
- *"I discovered how important personal stories can be in raising awareness and advocating for girls' rights. Sharing our stories can create empathy and inspire others to act."*
- *"The summit is different in how adolescents' safety is guaranteed. It is the first time seeing high-level dignitaries listening to children to amplify their voice."*

Recommendations from Adolescents and Youth

The following recommendations were captured and documented by adolescents and youth through the final survey and adolescent learning circles.

- There were several comments and suggestions about the logistics of the summit:
 - The timing of the summit meant that adolescents had to leave school. Next time it should be held during a holiday.
 - There were too many topics to cover in the 4 days of the summit. Consider extending the summit or narrowing the focus of the summit.
 - The air conditioning was too cold for many of the participants.
 - Communication about the daily dress code was not clear.
- Some adolescents recommended that Adult Assistants who speak English or French should stay in rooms next the adolescents who speak the same language, instead of being mixed. One person suggested that girls and boys should stay in separate parts of the hotel, and another asked for more check-ins on adolescents at night to make sure they are ok and are sleeping.

- Several adolescents asked for more opportunities and spaces to connect across the language barrier.
- The following are a few suggestions for the next AGS:
 - A request for it to focus more on how climate change impacts girls.
 - A request for the theme to be around school-related issues.
 - A request to focus more on topics like Gender-Based Violence and sexual exploitation.
 - Several adolescents also called for an increase in diversity at the next summit and wanted to be especially inclusive of young people with physical disabilities.
 - Adolescents want to see more government representatives from various African countries attend the next AGS.

Learnings and recommendations from Organizations and Partners

During the summit, we hosted daily debriefing sessions over dinner with organizations and partners of GFC who were involved in planning or speaking at the event. These debrief sessions were highly beneficial in reflecting on the learnings at organizational levels and documenting recommendations for the future AGS. There were also two learning circles with members of partner organizations who were attending as participants, rather than members of the core planning team.

Successes and improvements since the 2022 AGS:

- Overall partners felt that the 2024 AGS went very well. They reported that the event felt better organized, more comprehensive, and more inclusive than the 2022 AGS.
- Partners saw a huge improvement in the organizational skills, professionalism, and confidence of the adolescents who attended the 2022 AGS and were involved in planning the 2024 event. They felt that this change in the adolescents was a key reason why the 2024 AGS was a success.
- Young people and adults involved in planning and managing the AGS did a good job of working together across generational divides.
- Adolescents understood the importance of feedback and made time to listen to each other and participants.
- Young people who had attended the last AGS were much more confident in sharing their opinions and talking about taboo but important subjects like FGM this time around.
- There was a greater diversity among participants compared with the 2022 AGS.

Areas for improvement:

- Partners and other organizations who participated in the daily debriefing sessions felt that facilitators needed more support at the next AGS. They suggested that facilitators should arrive a day early to receive training, be provided with a facilitator's Guide to read before the event, and generally focus on making presentations more accessible through engaging visuals and simplified language.
- Several people said that more of the sessions should be led by adolescents and sessions that involve both adult and adolescent speakers need to make sure that adolescents get enough time to speak. Additionally, there should be adolescents among the keynote speakers.

- The AGS should have a clear advocacy plan for after the event to keep up the momentum and make sure the call to action is effective. This plan should involve following up with the organizations that attended to check on what they are doing to share their learning and advocate for the rights of girls. Part of this could include case studies of individual adolescents or adolescent-led organizations that are then shared out to spread awareness.
- Many people had difficulty with the interpretation. At the next AGS, more money should be invested in hiring more and/or better interpreters.
- Several people requested more activities to encourage engagement across language barriers, such as interactive games that don't require language and teaching everyone a few words in French, English, sign language, etc., at the beginning of the event.
- Consider focusing the AGS on a more specific topic. Some felt that there were too many different sessions going on at the same time, all of which were interesting.
- One person requested that the planning team consider including the next summit alternative livelihood products produced by adolescent girls or women's groups. This could include trainings on alternative livelihood skills like tie & dye, soap making, baking & catering, beads making, arts and crafts, etc.
- It was suggested that the roles, expectations, and differentiation between Partners and collaborating organizations be made clear in the planning stages.
- The summit was very successful in terms of movement building. However, the actors who are responsible for the direct asks in the Call to Actions were not all reflected in the attendees, and there was no clear plan of what is to be done with the Call-to-Actions.



General Group photo of participants present at AGS 2024.

Appreciation and Acknowledgement



Group photograph of the partners and stakeholders present on day one of AGS 2024.

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