Beat: Business

Girls Progress equals Goals Progress - What Counts for Girls -

17 Sustainable Development Goals

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USPA NEWS - The theme of this year´s International Day of the Girl is based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and central to the achievement of all of these goals is gender equity. Building equitable gender norms will enable girls to grow and develop to their full potential....

The theme of this year´s International Day of the Girl is based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and central to the achievement of all of these goals is gender equity. Building equitable gender norms will enable girls to grow and develop to their full potential. This is an important goal in itself and also contributes to achieving other goals.

Too often, however, early adolescence is a period of increased expectation for girls and boys to adhere to stereotypical norms and it is these norms that help to perpetuate gender inequality.

A recent review of existing research reveals that young adolescents commonly express stereotypical or inequitable gender attitudes. These inequitable attitudes contribute to harmful behaviours and related poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes. For girls, this can mean early pregnancy and complications associated with it, unsafe abortion, infection with STIs including HIV and/or other diseases.

Girls are also more likely than boys to be married as children and to experience forced sexual initiation. Almost 1 in 3 adolescent girls (15““19 years) report lifetime physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

With puberty, freedom of movement may be more restricted for girls, especially in low- and middle-income countries, as they are expected to take on more household chores, marry and/or stay away from boys due to adult concerns about their developing bodies and emerging sexuality. Gender inequalities also have other adverse socioeconomic consequences that prevent girls from fulfilling their potential including denying them opportunities to attend and complete their schooling, and reduced opportunities to access employment when they grow older.

CHANGING THE STEREOTYPES

Early adolescence is a unique opportunity to address gender attitudes before they become a factor that will have negative influences throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Promoting equitable gender attitudes requires empowering adolescent girls to challenge harmful norms, building their self-esteem and agency. The greatest influence shaping these deeply entrenched stereotypical norms appears to come from interpersonal influences such as family and peers

Other influences such as media are less clear, though there is some evidence that schools may play a role in reinforcing stereotypes. Programmes thus need to move beyond a focus on individuals to target their interpersonal relationships and wider social environments.

Empowering girls to reach their full potential is an important goal and a valid end in itself. Girls have the right to grow and develop to their full potential.

When girls are empowered, it benefits all. Empowered girls grow into empowered women who can care better for themselves and their families, increase their earning potential, serve as active and equal citizens and change agents, and spur economic growth for communities and nations.

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