



Adolescent Girls in Liberia

Adolescent girls in Liberia are part of a generation of young people, many of whom grew up without access to basic services and opportunities. Because of a 14-year civil war, many girls did not get an education, and now families often cannot afford the required uniforms and school supplies. The health care system was also severely damaged in the conflict and there are almost no health clinics for teen girls. In a country that's still recovering, safety is always an important issue and girls face widespread violence.

What is Girl Up doing in Liberia?

Girl Up funds a comprehensive program run by United Nations agencies – UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and UNESCO – that works with the hardest-to-reach adolescent girls to ensure that they are able to earn an income, stay healthy and avoid harmful traditional practices, by:

Providing tools for the future

The program cultivates champions for girls' education who will increase school attendance for girls and improve enrollment and retention by working with parents and teachers to form local PTA groups. Out-of-school girls receive training on how to run their own businesses and increase their earning potential.

Offering girl-friendly health services

To increase access to sensitive reproductive health information, older adolescent girls are trained to act as sexual health educators for their younger peers. In addition, schools and clinics are creating safe spaces where girls can feel comfortable asking health-related questions.

Reducing harmful traditional practices

The program builds clubs to serve as venues for community dialogues on the tough topics of violence against women and female genital mutilation. At the same time, program organizers engage local leaders in conversations about the negative effects of female genital mutilation and encourage them to advocate for the elimination of this practice.

Facts

- 40% of adolescents 15-19 years old report experiencing physical violence by age 15; 13% report experiencing sexual violence.*
- Rape is the most frequently reported crime; girls ages 10-14 are the most frequent victims.
- Liberia has the second highest birth rate in the world of girls between the ages of 10-14.
- Almost all – 96% – of Liberian households lack electricity, making it difficult for girls to do their homework and complete household tasks.

*Girls Discovered: Global Maps of Adolescent Girls. (2010). *Health and Wellbeing: Liberia*. Retrieved from http://www.girlsdiscovered.org/map/health_and_wellbeing/

About Liberia

The Republic of Liberia is a small country of 3.9 million people located on the coast of West Africa. Liberia's history is unique - it was founded and colonized by freed American slaves in the early- to mid-1800s. English is the official language, but only 20% of the population speaks English while the rest use some 20 different ethnic group languages.

Liberia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. A civil war ravaged the country for 14 years, damaging not only the economy, but also healthcare, education and protection services for its people. In 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made history as Africa's first elected female head of state when she was sworn in as Liberia's president. Reelected to a second six-year term in 2011, Johnson Sirleaf is working to reduce corruption and advance Liberia's economy.

Because adolescent girls in Liberia deserve to be educated, healthy, safe, counted and positioned to be the next generation of leaders.

You see a girl. We see the future.