



# HER BODY, HER FUTURE: THE ROLE OF REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE IN GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION

For a more equal, sustainable world, girls and young women need access to a quality education and reproductive choice. New analysis from MSI Reproductive Choices shows that increasing adolescent access to reproductive choice could support millions more girls to stay in school every year and determine the path their life takes.

## AN OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP UP TO 4 MILLION MORE GIRLS IN SCHOOL EVERY YEAR

The benefits of supporting girls to stay in school are far-reaching. When girls can access a quality education, they are better able to pursue a career, create opportunities in their communities and drive positive change.

However, [MSI's analysis](#) has revealed that a lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is driving high rates of unplanned teenage pregnancy, putting global commitments to girls' education at risk.

New MSI analysis has found that every year, in sub-Saharan Africa, up to 4 million teenage girls drop out of school or are excluded due to teenage pregnancy<sup>1</sup>. In Niger [1 in 2 girls](#) will give birth before their 18th birthday, while only 1 in 100 will finish secondary school. Meanwhile, [data from Zambia shows](#) that every year, 11,000 girls drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy, meaning one in four girls are dropping out for this reason.

It is vital that we transform access to reproductive healthcare for young people, providing them with bodily autonomy via the adolescent-friendly information and services they want and need to better understand their bodies, have safe relationships on their terms, avoid unplanned pregnancy and determine their futures.

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**11,000** In Zambia, every year, 11,000 girls drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy

## SUPPORTING GIRLS' FUTURES BUILDS A FAIRER WORLD FOR ALL

By supporting girls to access a quality education and reproductive choice, evidence shows we can increase gender equality and break cycles of poverty, contributing to several key sustainable development goals.

Each additional year of education can increase a woman's earnings by [up to 20%](#). With a quality education and reproductive choice, women are also better placed to lead. By boosting women's earnings, this could contribute to closing the gender pay gap, which has the potential of increasing global GDP [by \\$28 trillion by 2025](#).

However, many girls and young women continue to be denied what they need to thrive. Ahead of the pandemic, [UNESCO estimated](#) that 130 million girls were out of school, with COVID-19 likely driving this number higher. Meanwhile, [an estimated 23 million](#) adolescent girls want access to contraception but don't yet have it. Evidence shows that these figures are linked, highlighting the need to ensure girls have access to reproductive choice, supporting them to stay in school.

**“MY MOTHER DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL AT AGE 19 AND MY TWO AUNTIES DID THE SAME. THE ONE THING THAT WAS COMMON BETWEEN THEM WAS UNPLANNED PREGNANCY. MY AMBITION IS TO FINISH SECONDARY SCHOOL, GO TO UNIVERSITY AND ACHIEVE MY DREAM OF BECOMING A LAWYER. BUT I HAVE TO PROTECT MYSELF TO SEE MY DREAM COME TRUE.”**

**Blessing, an adolescent contraceptive client with MSI Nigeria**

**Pictured above:** Madame Sakho, a teacher partnering with MSI Reproductive Choices in Senegal to keep girls in school by providing access to information and services on contraception

<sup>1</sup> **MSI's methodology for estimating the number of girls dropping out of school due to teenage pregnancy:** Using UNESCO data on the number of girls in sub-Saharan Africa starting and finishing secondary school to calculate the number of girls dropping out of school, and research from UN Population Division, UNESCO and ECDQ on the reasons for why girls drop out to school across sub-Saharan Africa, MSI has estimated that between 2 and 4 million girls drop out of school every year due to teenage pregnancy. For further details on the Impact and Evidence shared in this briefing, contact [msi-us@msichoices.org](mailto:msi-us@msichoices.org)

## DENYING REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE PUTS GIRLS' HEALTH AND FUTURES AT RISK

There are several intersecting threats to a girl's education. In low- and middle-income countries, access to education is highly gendered, with teenage pregnancy playing a key role.

Globally, teenage girls experience more challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights and in low and middle-income countries, teenage girls are almost twice as likely as women of all reproductive ages to want access to contraception, but not yet have it.

Every year, an estimated 21 million adolescent girls fall pregnant and 12 million give birth. Pregnancy can be dangerous for adolescents, with young women at increased risk of unsafe abortion and childbirth complications. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth continue to be the leading cause of death for adolescent girls aged 15-19 globally.

**21M** Every year, an estimated 21 million adolescent girls fall pregnant

Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally

## RECOMMENDATIONS: DELIVERING REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

To support girls and young women to remain in school, we need to ensure access to contraception, safe abortion and other quality healthcare services that keep them safe, whatever their reproductive choices might be. To do this, we need to:

1. Increase access to accurate information, including through comprehensive sexuality education programs that refer adolescents to safe services
2. Increase the availability of adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive healthcare services
3. Remove legal restrictions that prevent adolescent access
4. Ensure sufficient funding for sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

## MSI'S ADOLESCENT STRATEGY

At MSI, we work to expand access to adolescent-inclusive sexual and reproductive healthcare. Since launching MSI's adolescent strategy in 2017, MSI has provided over 4.3 million adolescents with reproductive choice.

It costs only \$8 per year – or 3 cents per day – for MSI to provide a woman or girl with lifesaving reproductive health services, giving them the power to decide if or when to become pregnant.

Get in touch to find out more about partnering with MSI to deliver reproductive choice to young people.

**+20%**

Each additional year of education can increase a woman's earnings by up to 20%

**\$28T**

By contributing to closing the gender pay gap, this has the potential of boosting global GDP by \$28 trillion by 2025



**“IT'S THANKS TO MSI THAT I WAS ABLE TO FINISH MY STUDIES. AT SCHOOL WE OFTEN SEE GIRLS WHO FALL PREGNANT AND USUALLY THEY DON'T COME BACK. THE EXPERIENCE I HAD WITH MSI REALLY HELPED ME, BECAUSE I COULD HAVE STOPPED MY STUDIES, BUT NOW I'M IN MY FINAL YEAR. IF MSI WASN'T HERE I DON'T KNOW WHAT MY LIFE WOULD BE LIKE TODAY.”**

An adolescent client with MSI Senegal

**\$8 PER YEAR**

It costs only \$8 per year – or 3 cents per day – for MSI to provide a woman or girl with lifesaving reproductive health services.

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