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Empowering adolescent girls

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Dr Perna Banati



Anchored in human rights

“...[the General Comment] provides guidance to States on the measures necessary to ensure the realization of the rights of children during adolescence... and highlights the importance of a human rights-based approach that includes recognition and respect for the dignity and agency of adolescents; their empowerment, citizenship and active participation in their own lives; the promotion of optimum health, wellbeing and development; and a commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfillment”

CRC General Comment No. 20 (2016)

Why during adolescence?

- Physical, intellectual, emotional, and identity development.
- Consolidation, challenge or transformation of gender roles.
- Break the cycle of poverty.
- Contribute to reducing adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- Critical part of mental health and resilience, promotes social inclusion, peacebuilding and social harmony.
- Entry point for promoting civic participation.



Why attention to girls?

- Gendered vulnerabilities, with risks of more challenging transitions
- Historic underinvestment
- Inequalities in systems of care and support

Every year, 12 million girls are married before their 18th birthday – that's 23 girls per minute who lose their right to a childhood.

In LMICs 12 million adolescent girls aged 15–19 years give birth every year and an estimated 2 million girls give birth before they turn 15.

4 in 10 adolescent girls aged 15–19 years who want to avoid pregnancy are currently not using a modern contraceptive method.

In the past two decades, there has been no decrease in the number of girls aged 15–19 years who are moderately or severely underweight.

98 million girls who should be in secondary school are not.

Nearly one in four girls aged 15–19 years is neither employed nor in education or training compared to 1 in 10 boys of the same age.

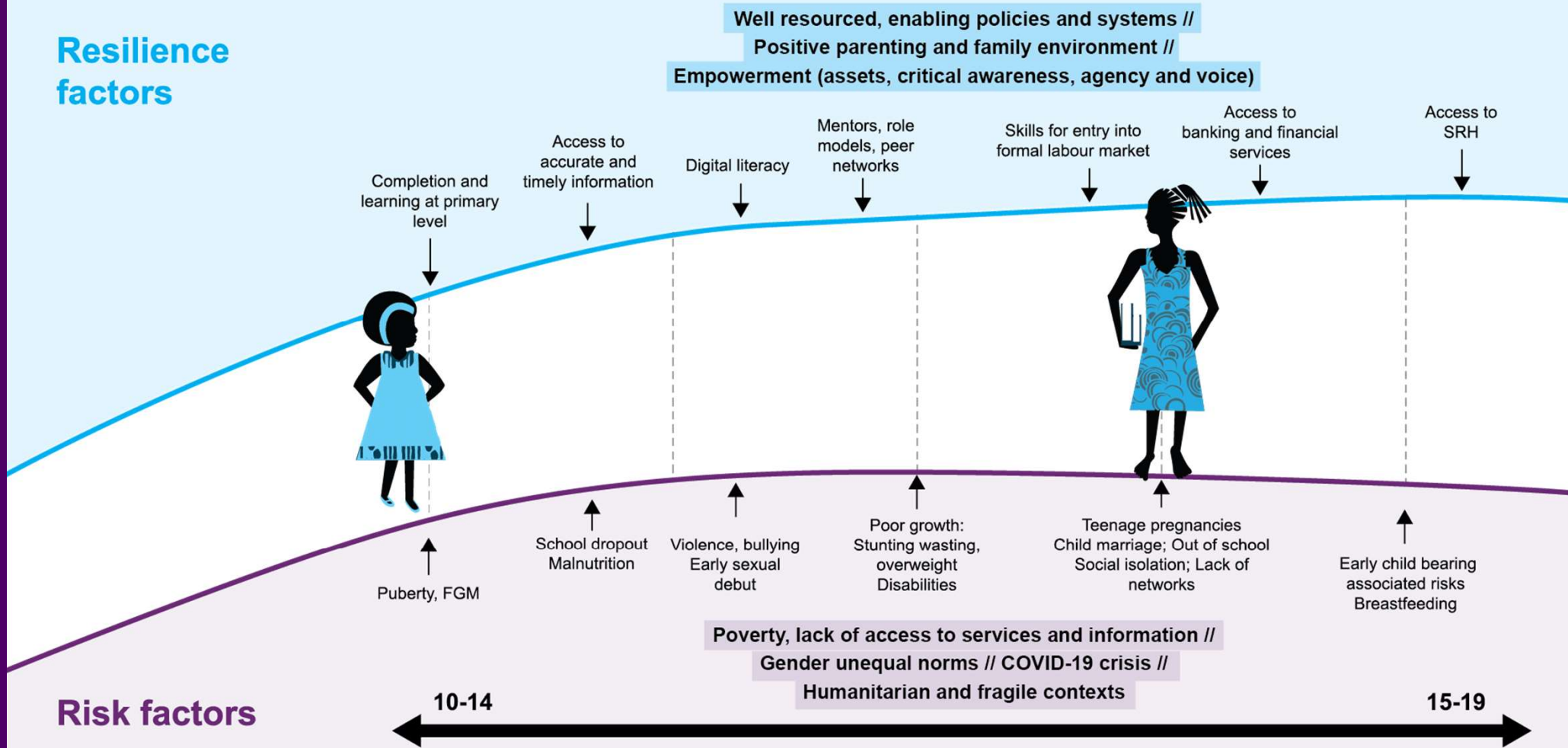
Girls account for two-thirds of all new HIV infections in the 15-19 age group.

Thirteen million girls aged 15–19, or one in every 20, have experienced forced sex.

500 million women and girls lack adequate facilities for dignified menstrual health and hygiene

Risk and Resilience for Girls through Adolescence

Resilience factors

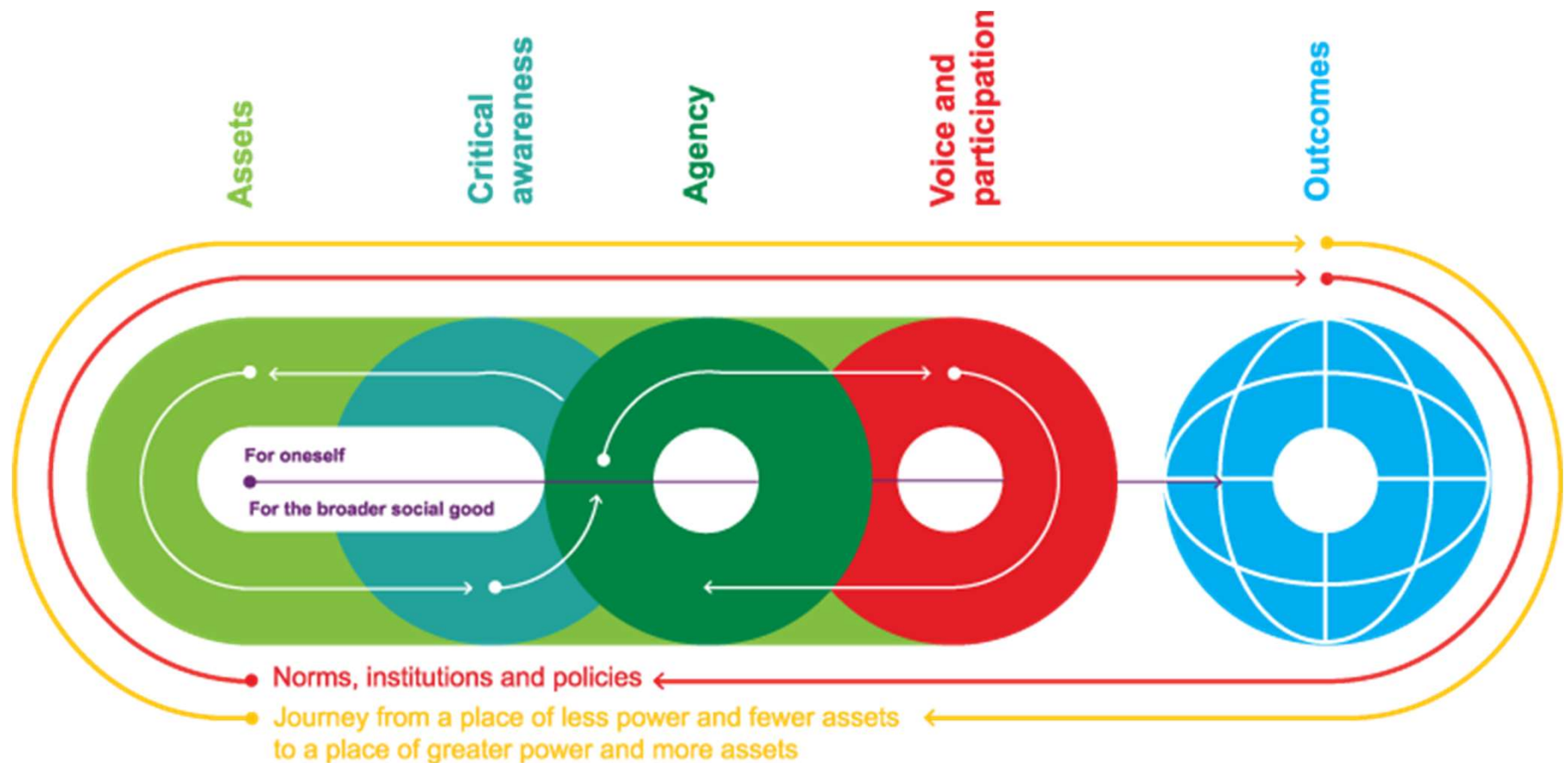


The enabling environment for empowerment

*Any commitment to support adolescents on their empowerment journey requires efforts to **transform the structures, institutions and dynamics** which reinforce and perpetuate inequality and negative social norms.*



A Framework for Empowerment – Towards a definition



A Framework for Empowerment

Graphic represents the dynamic and interconnected nature of **assets, critical awareness, agency and voice and participation** – that taken together enhance adolescents' abilities to make informed choices and negotiate a safe transition to adulthood.



Programming for Empowerment



Scale • Sustainability • Access • Quality • Multicomponent • Political will

Programming for Empowerment



Assets

- Providing opportunities for adolescents to learn transferable skills.
- Supporting economic empowerment interventions.
- Promoting and advocating for supportive laws, policies and budgets that support adolescents and institutionalize their participation



Agency

- Awareness raising for adolescent and adult stakeholders on adolescent development
- Incorporating issues of human rights, including equity and inclusion in curricula
- Support adolescent-driven and adolescent-led space and processes for voice and participation

Programming for Empowerment



Enabling environment

- Engaging caregivers/parents in adolescent programming
- Creating safe spaces for adolescents
- Enhancing positive social and gender norms and attitudes concerning the rights and capacity of adolescents



Networks and opportunities

- Expand mentorship programs in and out of schools
- Create and support girl led activist groups
- Offering and supporting volunteer programs

The Critical Role of Men and Boys

- Engaging boys and men in shifting power imbalances towards achieving gender equality.
- Boys and men can be agents of change and key allies in championing gender-transformative programs.
- Girl-intentional programming can link with or identify opportunities to support boys and men to level the playing field for women and girls, and also transform harmful models of masculinity, while practicing accountability towards women and girls.



For more information, please contact

Purna Banati

pbanati@unicef.org

United Nations Children's Fund

3 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017, USA

www.unicef.org

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