

NEWS FROM THE POPULATION COUNCIL

# Momentum

DECEMBER 2009



## ADOLESCENT GIRLS

*Participants learn about opening savings accounts at a GO Girl! program in Kenya*

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# WHY FOCUS ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS?

52.5  
million

ESTIMATED  
NUMBER OF  
11-YEAR-OLD  
GIRLS IN  
DEVELOPING  
COUNTRIES  
IN 2010<sup>1</sup>

6.5  
million

ESTIMATED  
NUMBER OF  
11-YEAR-OLD  
GIRLS IN  
INDUSTRIALIZED  
COUNTRIES  
IN 2010<sup>1</sup>

10–20%

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN A  
GIRL'S FUTURE EARNINGS FOR  
EACH ADDITIONAL YEAR OF  
PRIMARY SCHOOL<sup>2</sup>

15–25%

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN A  
GIRL'S FUTURE EARNINGS FOR  
EACH ADDITIONAL YEAR OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL<sup>2</sup>

14  
million

NUMBER OF GIRLS AGED 15–19  
GIVING BIRTH IN DEVELOPING  
COUNTRIES EACH YEAR<sup>3</sup>

70,000

NUMBER OF GIRLS AGED 15–19  
WHO DIE FROM PREGNANCY-  
RELATED COMPLICATIONS,  
THE LEADING CAUSE OF  
DEATH AMONG GIRLS IN THIS  
AGE GROUP<sup>4</sup>

7 YEARS OF EDUCATION  
SHOWN TO DELAY MAR-  
RIAGE BY 4 YEARS FOR  
A GIRL IN THE DEVELOP-  
ING WORLD, RESULTING IN HER  
BEARING 2.2 FEWER CHILDREN<sup>5</sup>

29%

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS AGED  
10–14 IN DEVELOPING COUN-  
TRIES WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL<sup>6</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2009. *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*. <<http://esa.un.org/unpp>>. Accessed 13 October 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Psacharopoulos, G. and H.A. Patrinos. 2002. "Returns to investment in education: A further update." *Policy Research Working Paper No. 2881*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2006. *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*. <[http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf)>. p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF. 2008. *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Maternal Mortality*. New York: UNICEF. p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 1990. *State of World Population 1990*. New York: UNFPA.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd, Cynthia B. (ed.). 2005. *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. p. 77.

# IF WE INVEST IN GIRLS, GIRLS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

by Peter J. Donaldson, President



ZELEMAN PRODUCTIONS

**In the slums of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, having a notebook and learning to read are only a dream for many girls.** With an average income of \$6 per month, young migrant girls doing domestic work are isolated, invisible, and ignored. When the Population Council and the local government started its program for out-of-school girls in Ethiopia (page 4), many people were skeptical that we could reach such marginalized girls. On my recent trip to Ethiopia, I visited a community center packed with girls taking literacy classes and receiving health check-ups and other social services. Nearly 10,000 girls—one-third of whom are domestic workers—have participated in this program.

The Council's Poverty, Gender, and Youth Program focuses on adolescent girls because they face significant disadvantages that impede their social, health, and economic opportunities. Because of gender bias and marginalization, girls are often seen as unworthy of investment or protection by their families or communities. Poor girls are often forced to marry at very young ages and are vulnerable to HIV, sexual violence, and early pregnancy. They are often invisible in development programs and policies. Yet given their future role in determining the health and income of families, they are critical assets to their communities. When we reach the most vulnerable adolescents and give them life skills, education, and social opportunities, we can increase the odds that they will become healthy

and economically productive adults. Our research proves that we must focus on 10–19-year-olds, often targeting girls as young as age 10 or younger.

Council-sponsored programs are **teaching financial literacy to girls** in the slums of Kenya (page 6), **creating employment opportunities** for disadvantaged Mayan girls in Guatemala (page 8), and giving out-of-school girls in Upper Egypt (page 10) **a chance to return to school**. Your investment in programs like these has given thousands of adolescent girls tools to prepare for the future.

With your help, the Council has been a leader in shaping governments' and global policy on adolescents. On page 14, read about Judith Bruce, a Senior Associate

with the Council, who for decades has championed programs and policies that directly benefit girls. Our high-quality research and pioneering interventions have led policymakers in many nations to finally include girls in their development policies. Sukey Wagner, a long-time donor to the Council who has visited our programs, discusses why she believes helping girls is so important (page 15).

**Alleviating poverty and improving the health of current and future generations around the world are impossible without effective investments in adolescent girls.**

Your contribution ensures that girls get the core skills, social support, and opportunity to take ownership of their lives and strive for a more promising future.

# A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR MIGRANT GIRLS

In Ethiopia, poor adolescent girls are mentored by a Council-supported program.

**THE PROBLEM** Girls in Ethiopia migrate to urban areas seeking work and educational opportunities or escape from an early marriage. Some have lost one or both parents to AIDS. They are often uneducated, socially isolated, and unprotected. What they find is domestic work, where they are always poorly paid and sometimes badly beaten or abused; some are forced into sex work. The girls have few friends, no one to go to for assistance, few opportunities for schooling, and no safe places to meet other girls and build networks of support.

**THE PROGRESS** The Population Council and governmental organizations developed the *Biruh Tesfa* (“Bright Future”) program to provide a place for migrant and other out-of-school girls living with extended family members to learn to read, access health services, develop friendships, and receive vocational training. Trained female mentors, who lead groups of girls, also establish relationships with the girls’ employers in order to enroll and keep the girls in the program. *Biruh Tesfa* is often the first chance for many of the girls to obtain at least functional literacy, such as signing their names, and other life skills. It is also building vocational training programs to assist with job placement and strengthen personal financial management skills.

**WHAT’S NEXT** The *Biruh Tesfa* program has successfully reached over

“ THE CHILD OF MY EMPLOYER BEATS ME WITHOUT REASON. WHEN I ASK HIM WHY HE DOES THAT, HE BEATS ME AGAIN. ”

—Migrant girl, age 14,  
2 years of education

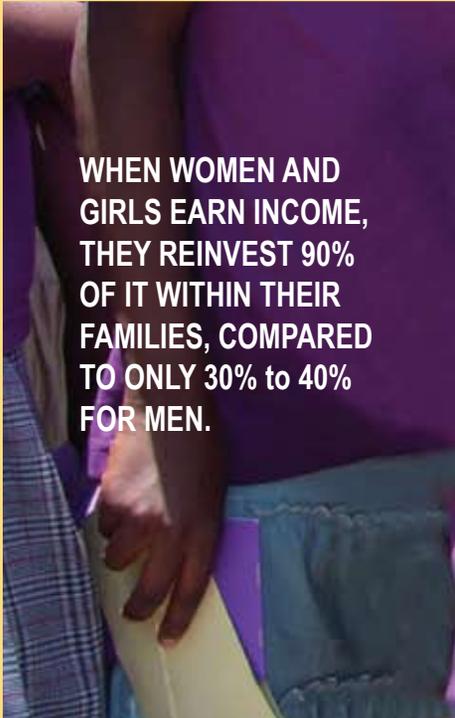
10,000 of Ethiopia’s most vulnerable girls. The program now operates in Addis Ababa and four other cities, and will be expanding to eleven more towns and the city of Mekelle. A new component will be creation of voucher-based referral systems to increase the girls’ access to HIV and AIDS prevention, diagnosis, and treatment programs.

**DONORS** Nike Foundation, President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Turner Foundation, UK Department for International Development, United Nations Foundation, United Nations Population Fund, US Agency for International Development

**PARTNERS** Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bureaus of Youth and Sports in Addis Ababa and Amhara Region, Youth and Sports Offices in North Gondar, West Gojjam, East Gojjam, South Wollo, Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Gondar, Dessie, and Debre Markos, Nia Foundation, Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association, and Organization for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Female Street Children.



# EMPOWERING GIRLS TO CONTROL THEIR FINANCIAL FUTURES



**WHEN WOMEN AND GIRLS EARN INCOME, THEY REINVEST 90% OF IT WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES, COMPARED TO ONLY 30% TO 40% FOR MEN.**

Adolescent girls in many developing countries have the opportunity to save only small amounts of money.

**THE PROBLEM** Without access to formal, safe savings institutions, girls are at increased risk of robbery and sexual violence and suffer harassment from family members. To prevent these problems, girls need access to financial institutions and education programs, and support from peers and mentors to protect them. As girls grow up, their savings can empower them to make decisions in critical areas like healthcare and education.

**THE PROGRESS** The Council, together with Kenyan microfinance and financial institutions, designed a program offering interest-bearing savings accounts

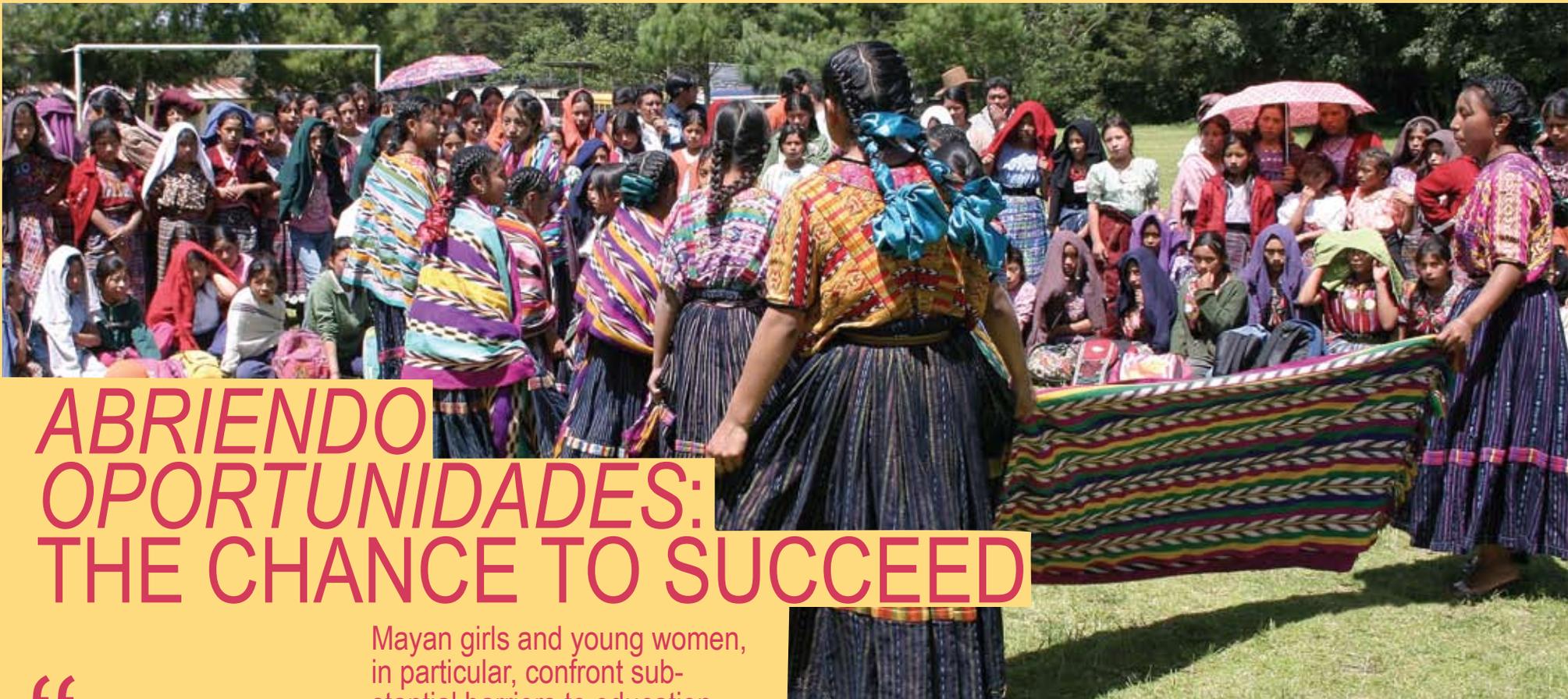


and social and economic skills development to girls in Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi. The program rewards (through higher interest rates, recognition, and small gifts) higher savings, frequency of deposits, and active participation in the program. A female mentor organizes weekly meetings that include workshops with a financial officer and informal social gatherings where girls celebrate their progress. The social component, including training in financial education and health topics, making friends, fun days, and mentoring, is important to girls who have few opportunities to build friendships and socialize in a safe environment.

**WHAT'S NEXT** The program is now in the pilot phase, with over 1,000 girls enrolled in Kibera. The Council will expand the program across Kenya and Uganda using survey data to understand which aspects of the program are most effective at helping girls save and at giving them confidence and control over their financial future.

**DONOR** Nike Foundation

**PARTNERS** Finance Trust, FINCA-Uganda, K-Rep Bank, K-Rep Development Agency (KDA), Faulu Kenya Limited, Microfinance Opportunities, MicroSave Consulting, Ltd.



# ABRIENDO OPORTUNIDADES: THE CHANCE TO SUCCEED

“ IF IT WASN'T FOR THIS PROGRAM, I WOULD NOT HAVE STAYED IN SCHOOL AND I WOULD PROBABLY BE MARRIED. BUT NOW I HAVE DIFFERENT IDEAS, MORE SKILLS, AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES. ”

—Rosa Lacan Petzey,  
female mentor and peer educator

Mayan girls and young women, in particular, confront substantial barriers to education, health, and social services.

**THE PROBLEM** Guatemala is one of the poorest and fastest-growing countries in the Americas. Because of political conflict and ethnic discrimination, the indigenous, mostly Mayan, peoples, who make up nearly half the population, are extremely marginalized. As a result, girls often drop out of school, are coerced into early marriage, experience unsafe pregnancy and premature motherhood, and face lives of hard domestic labor, gender violence, malnutrition, and poverty.

**THE PROGRESS** The Population Council, with public and NGO partners, developed a program to give Mayan girls what they need most: skills and opportunities. *Abriendo*

*Oportunidades* (Creating Opportunities) is a leadership and empowerment program that teaches girls life, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills, and provides information about reproductive health. Girls aged 8–18 develop friendship networks, have female role models, and establish safe spaces to learn and play in their communities. Older girls receive paid professional internships and teach and mentor younger girls through girls' clubs on topics such as gender equality, health, financial skills, and entrepreneurship. These clubs offer a safe place for girls to form friendships and receive support.

**WHAT'S NEXT** The program has transformed the lives of more than 3,000 girls in over 30 indigenous communities. Girls are developing greater self-esteem,

more ambitious education and life goals, and practical knowledge and skills. They are now perceived as valuable assets in their families and communities and are changing norms about gender equality. This effort is poised to become the first nationally institutionalized program for indigenous girls in the region.

**DONORS** Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UK Department for International Development (DFID), Nike Foundation, Partridge Foundation, Research Triangle Institute/Alanzas/USAID, Summit Foundation, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

**PARTNERS** Asociación Renacimiento, Cooperativa para el Desarrollo Rural del Occidente (CDRO), EngenderHealth, Federación de Salud Infantil y Reproductiva de Guatemala (FESIRGUA), Kiej de los Bosques, Mercy Corps, Pies de Occidente, Proyecto para el Desarrollo Sostenible de las Comunidades Ak'aba'al (Prodesca)

# ISHRAQ: TEACHING LITERACY, LIFE SKILLS... AND SPORTS!

In Upper Egypt, hundreds of thousands of girls do not go to school at all or drop out after one or two years.

“ISHRAQ IS A SPARK OF LIGHT THAT TAKES OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS TO A NEW WORLD AND BECOMES A GUIDE, A ROLE MODEL, AND A FRIEND”

—*Ishraq* graduate



**THE PROBLEM** Girls in rural Egypt are about three times less likely than girls in urban areas to be enrolled in school. Mostly illiterate, lacking in skills, and out of school, they are socially isolated within their families, burdened with heavy domestic chores, and at risk for early marriage.

**THE PROGRESS** To help these marginalized rural girls develop and mature in safe learning environments, we and our partners established a pilot program called *Ishraq* (*sunrise* in Arabic). *Ishraq* is implemented in youth centers as

a way of improving girls' access to public spaces and visibility in the community. It reaches out-of-school girls aged 12–15, emphasizing literacy and life skills, reproductive health, civic engagement, livelihood information, and—unprecedented in Egypt—sports. Sports programs help girls gain self-confidence, a new understanding of their bodies, a network of friends, and group solidarity, which then transform the way they view themselves within their families and community. The program, carefully designed to be culturally sensitive, provides a structured school setting for learning and acquiring the skills that girls will need in adulthood.

Between 2001 and 2007, *Ishraq* fostered entry or re-entry into formal education for 900 girls. The girls developed literacy, teamwork, and networking skills and now enjoy greater participation in community life and entrance into the public arena. Ninety-two percent of the girls who completed the pilot program and took the government literacy exam passed. More than 65 percent of the girls have entered the formal school system.

**WHAT'S NEXT** By 2011, with the generous support of our donors, *Ishraq* will expand into 50 additional villages,

reaching a total of 2,800 new girls. Once scaled-up and evaluated, the Egyptian National Council for Youth is poised to adopt this program in more communities.

**DONORS** The Dickler Family Foundation, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Cairo, EMpower, ExxonMobil Foundation, The Ford Foundation/Egypt, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Nike Foundation, UK Department for International Development, United Nations Children's Fund/Egypt

**PARTNERS** Caritas Egypt, The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), the Egyptian National Council for Youth, Save the Children, and local NGOs

# THE SEVEN-STEP APPROACH

## TO CREATING EVIDENCE-BASED, TARGETED ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

To ensure that investments in adolescents reach those in greatest need with measurable results, the Population Council designed a seven-step approach now in use in several developing countries.

**1 Making the case for investing in adolescent girls and other vulnerable sub-groups of youth** in the context of national Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs)



Countries need to recognize that MDGs cannot be achieved without targeted investments in adolescents, especially the most socially excluded groups, early enough to make a difference in alleviating poverty, promoting universal primary school education, containing the HIV epidemic, reducing maternal mortality, and fostering gender equality.

**2 The Population Decomposition Exercise:** Understanding sources of future population growth and the role that investments in adolescents might play in shaping the demographic future



Population Council demographer John Bongaarts has identified four factors (out-migration, high fertility, declining mortality, and age structure) as contributors to countries' future population growth. A high and rising proportion of future population growth in the poorest high-fertility countries results from child marriage, which in turn is driven by a lack of investment in adolescent girls.

**3 Mapping the internal diversity of adolescents** through the disaggregation of data to identify vulnerable sub-groups of young people



Policymakers often submerge adolescents into an overly large youth population, typically 15 to 24, sometimes as high as 35. Using internationally comparable data sets, primarily demographic and health surveys, the Council provides data graphically, including in maps, to reveal large, often neglected sub-groups of adolescents, differentiating their experience by age, gender, marital status, living arrangement (whether with one or two parents or on their own), and schooling.

**4 Identifying critical and gender-specific transitions** into vulnerability during adolescence



Puberty is life changing for boys and girls—especially for girls, who experience puberty on average two years earlier than boys. This factor is often not taken into account in programs that reach the wrong populations; and even when programs do reach the right ones, it is often too late. The Council offers graphic findings (e.g., rates of leaving school, child marriage, and other factors) that allow us to see when significant portions go off a healthy track.

**5 The Coverage Exercise:** Assessing the coverage of current adolescent- and youth-serving interventions



The Coverage Exercise is a tool used by program managers and policymakers to identify whom services and investments are reaching and with what intensity. By comparing these findings with information generated in Steps 3 and 4, we can judge whether there is an appropriate match of resources to needs.

**6 Identifying programs that work for disadvantaged groups of youth**



Case studies of good practice in specific or similar context encourage experimentation with programs that reach critical groups such as girls at risk of child marriage, first-time adolescent mothers, or adolescents in exploitative work.

**7 Selecting laboratories as a collective resource:** areas in which baseline data, repeated over time, allow for more in-depth and systematic research and impact evaluations



Countries are encouraged to select communities that are illustrative of critical scenarios of disadvantage such as districts with extremely high levels of child marriage or in-migration of poor children and adolescents. These data, tracked over time, provide a means to chart progress and evaluate interventions.

## A CONVERSATION WITH

# JUDITH BRUCE

## PIONEERING STRATEGIST FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS



### Why did you get involved with programming for adolescent girls?

Back in the early 1990s—the “dawn” of youth programming—before anyone was focusing on girls, we posed the question: Who is at risk of and carries the most promise to solve the problems the Council is serious about solving? These problems include: reducing maternal mortality since the youngest first-time mothers carry elevated risks; delaying childbearing; creating the conditions for women to negotiate for protected, consented relations and the timing and number of their children; protecting against STDs (which now unhappily include the rising HIV epidemic, whose victims are increasingly young, poor, and female); and broad-based development given that a rising proportion and often majority of households are supported by women. The answer was and is: the Poorest girls in the Poorest communities.

### What are the greatest challenges to your work?

The biggest challenge is convincing people that these neglected and unappreciated girls are worth investing in. Even now, there is an overwhelming tendency to try to fix girls’ problems without ever working with the girls themselves. Programmers—in the name of “girls”—want to work with

teachers, with parents, with healthcare professionals, with the police, with male peers, and community gatekeepers. There is still a deep resistance to directly building the health, economic, and social assets of girls, especially the youngest.

### What are some of your greatest successes?

I am deeply proud of the emerging army of girl advocates and the programs featured in this issue of *Momentum*. Each program is innovative and well adapted to its context. Each one brings real change to real girls by engaging them directly while developing their leadership capacities. Following the initial pilots that provided “proof of concept,” each has been scaled up.

### You’ve been at the Council since 1977. Why?

I’ve stayed at the Council because it has been a supportive environment, now and from the beginning, for critical inquiry and innovation; I get up in the morning because of the girls. The combination is fantastic. I get to go to the Council, which feels like a home to me, and work on the subject closest to my heart—the six hundred million girls of the developing world.

## PROFILE

# SUKEY WAGNER

## COUNCIL DONOR



### WHY I GIVE TO THE POPULATION COUNCIL

I became involved with the Population Council over seven years ago when my husband, Rodney Wagner, was Chair of the Board. We traveled and saw several Council project sites, and I was impressed with the creativity and realistic aspirations of these programs. In Ghana, I visited a program where nurses went regularly to the homes of families in villages to provide primary care. It was stunning to see how much one nurse could do.

I am also involved with schools in South Africa, Turkey, Bhutan, and Ethiopia. For just a few dollars, you can enable a family to buy a school uniform and a few books. When I travel and come back to America, I see the glut of personal possessions that we have. We just throw things away to make room for other things. Yet when I visited a school in South Africa, I saw a girl in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with a pencil, not even two inches long, tied to a string around her neck so she wouldn’t lose it. This stub of a pencil was her treasure.

Before he passed away, Rodney used to say that you can’t care about development in developing countries if you don’t care about population issues. I couldn’t agree more. If you can’t give people a choice about

the number and timing of their children and provide good care for the people, development is virtually impossible.

Girls are crucial to a country’s development. If you can prevent a girl from getting married at 13 and give her some education, there is a multiplier effect. Her life chances change, which changes the chances for her family, and the future of her community.

I traveled to Ethiopia with a friend and visited the Council’s program for girls. My friend asked one girl, “What do you want in your future?” Her reply was, “I want this school to stay open.” This program has led me to believe that you can change a community, and even an entire country, by changing the scenario for these girls. As women, they will carry their culture by affecting the future of their families and many of the people around them.

I support the Population Council because they do first-class work. It is so pleasing to travel around the world and to hear people from other NGOs speak so highly of the Population Council. The Council has a great reputation which reinforces my desire to stick with them.



## NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE INVESTMENTS IN BUILDING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASSETS OF GIRLS.

When girls are able to navigate successful transitions to adulthood, their potential to their communities can be unleashed.

This issue of *Momentum* highlights Population Council initiatives in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, where we are reaching marginalized girls with programs for education and economic and social growth—opening up opportunities formerly nonexistent or closed to them.

The Population Council alerts policymakers to the problems that girls face and identifies promising solutions. We evaluate the impact of these remedies, disseminate our results, and encourage governments and NGOs to implement or expand programs based on what we have

learned. There is still much work to be done to improve the lives of many more adolescent girls around the world. With your support, we can continue to develop replicable programs that provide educational, social, and economic support to vulnerable girls to help them realize brighter, more productive, and healthier futures. We believe that girls hold the key to a better world. With your help, they will believe it too. Thank you for your generous support.

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# Population Council

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