

The Adolescent Girls Initiative:

An Alliance for Economic Empowerment

Where We Are

The AGI at-a-Glance

April 2009

Objective. The Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) promotes the transition of adolescent girls from school to productive employment through innovative interventions that are tested, and then scaled-up or replicated if successful. The initiative is being implemented in low-income and post-conflict countries over a three-year time horizon.

Launch date. The AGI was launched on October 10, 2008 as part of the World Bank Group's Gender Action Plan—*Gender Equality as Smart Economics*—which is helping to increase women's economic opportunities by improving their access to the labor market, agricultural land and technology, credit and infrastructure services. The AGI is one of President Zoellick's six commitments to promote gender equality via economic empowerment.

Partners-to-date. The Bank's partners in the AGI are the governments of Afghanistan, Denmark, Liberia, Nepal, Norway, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, The Nike Foundation and Cisco Systems. The Bank also is developing partnerships with other public and private sector organizations interested in joining the AGI.

Financing. A total of U.S. \$16 million, plus in-kind contributions.

Important Features of the AGI Process

Leadership. The AGI was spearheaded by Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who signed on to undertake the initiative's first pilot project, and by the Bank's leadership, President Robert Zoellick and Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. The Nike Foundation provided the first funding for the initiative and has been a key partner, both in designing the Liberia project and in promoting the wider initiative. Their leadership has contributed to the initiative's global visibility: the AGI was featured in the fourth annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in September 2008 and the World Economic Forum in February 2009.

Generating policy lessons through rigorous impact evaluation is a central feature of the AGI. Two Bank senior economists will supervise the design of the impact evaluations in all five countries, ensuring both comparability among key indicators and the policy relevance of evaluation results.

Design and implementation are being fast-tracked. Regional vice-presidencies and PREM have allocated bridge funds to speed project preparation until donor funds are received. Identification missions and concept review meetings have been held for all AGI countries.

Informal peer review by recognized experts inside and outside the Bank adds value to formal Bank review processes. Task teams debrief the AGI Steering Group at two key points in the project design cycle:

- Immediately upon return from the identification mission, in order to engage in an informal discussion on options for project design. These discussions have led to simplifications and improvements in the AGI projects.
- Upon completion of the impact evaluation design, in order to ensure that the impact evaluation meets the highest standards of relevance and rigor.

Country ownership of AGI projects is strong.

AGI Steering Group Members

Mayra Buvinic, Director (PRMGE), Chair
Wendy Cunningham, Lead Specialist (HDNCY)
Lisa MacCallum, Managing Director (Nike Foundation)
Markus Goldstein, Senior Economist (AFTPM)
Monica Das Gupta, Senior Social Scientist (DECRG)
Emmanuel Skoufias, Lead Economist (PRMPR)
Emmanuel Y. Jimenez, Sector Director (EASHD)
Jorge Saba Arbache, Senior Economist (AFRCE)
Andrew Morrison, Lead Economist (PRMGE)
Junaid Kamal Ahmad, Sector Manager (SASDU)



Nepal

- **Task Team Leader:** Bhuvan Bhatnagar, Lead Social Development Specialist (SASDI)
- **Objective:** promote access to employment and increased incomes for about 3500 young women by scaling up and modifying an existing skills

training and placement program—the Employment Fund (EF)—that has shown very strong results to date. The EF is currently administered by Helvetas Nepal while the Ministry of Education chairs the EF Steering Committee. Both the Swiss Development Cooperation and the UK Department of International Development are key partners in this intervention.

- **Next steps:** Finalize project design during the April/May 2009 preparation mission, including: the program's target and outreach strategy, content of the life skills component, scope of capacity-building interventions, and the project's impact evaluation.



Rwanda

- **Task Team Leader:** Paul Francis, Sr. Social Development Specialist (AFTCS)
- **Objective:** improve employment and increase incomes for disadvantaged adolescent girls and young women in two urban and two rural districts in Rwanda.

- **Next steps:** Selection of project districts; rapid assessments of factors constraining target groups' access to labor market, local labor market conditions, and institutional environment; stakeholder consultations.



South Sudan

- **Task Team Leader:** Yasmin Tayyab, Sr. Social Development Specialist (AFTCS)
- **Objective:** improve employment and increase incomes of adolescent girls and young women through demand-driven training and linkages to market opportunities.

- **Next steps:** Evaluate the expression-of-interest proposals from local and international organizations by the first week of April, request for technical and financial proposals from the short-listed consultants by the second week of June.

Country Updates



Afghanistan

- **Task Team Leader:** Jennifer Solotaroff, Gender Specialist (SASDI)
- **Objective:** provide job skills and training to adolescent girls and young women in Balkh Province, leading to their increased access to wage employment.

- The team is exploring synergies with ongoing Bank projects in Afghanistan, including the Educational Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP I and II), and the Afghanistan Skills Development Project (ASDP).
- **Next steps:** A preparation mission in May 2009 to further develop project details with the Ministry of Education (the executing ministry for the project) and make arrangements for situational analyses and other diagnostics needed for project preparation.



Liberia

- **Task Team Leader:** Andrew Morrison, Lead Economist (PRMGE)
- **Objective:** promote entry into wage- and self-employment for approximately 2500 girls in Monrovia, Kakata and surrounding areas via the provision of business

development skills, job skills and life skills.

- With the preparatory phase completed, training is scheduled to begin shortly.
- **Next steps:** The Ministry of Gender and Development, the executing ministry for the project, will sign contracts with training providers and the impact evaluation organization.