



Our Call to Action for International Adolescent Health Week

Financing Her Future: Putting AGYW at the Heart of Health and Decision-Making

This International Adolescent Health Week, the Gender Equality Fund calls on governments, donors, health systems, civil society, communities and partners to move beyond short-term commitments and invest in sustainable systems where adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) can shape the decisions that affect their health, rights and futures.

The theme this year is: **“Nothing About Us Without Us: Power, Voice and Health Equity for All Adolescents”**. The experiences of adolescents and young people show us that meaningful progress happens when they are not only consulted, but have the resources, platforms and decision-making power to influence programmes, policies and investments.

Through the Gender Equality Fund (GEF) in Nigeria, we have seen what becomes possible when resources are directed towards communities and when AGYW are recognised as leaders and partners in shaping the solutions that affect their lives. Since 2024, GEF has contributed to gender-transformative action by supporting community-driven approaches that strengthen the leadership and agency of AGYW, address gender-related barriers to health and HIV services, and create opportunities for young women to participate meaningfully in advocacy, programme implementation and decision-making. These investments demonstrate that gender transformation is not achieved through isolated activities.

It requires sustained financing, stronger community systems and the integration of AGYW leadership and priorities into the institutions, programmes and services that will remain long after individual projects end.

We must continue to build on this work. We call on all stakeholders to:

- **Institutionalise AGYW leadership in decision-making.** Create formal, funded and sustained roles for AGYW within health governance structures, programme committees, funding processes and community platforms, from priority setting and budgeting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

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- **Integrate AGYW priorities into health systems and national plans.** Ensure that the needs and priorities of AGYW are embedded within national health strategies, HIV, TB and SRHR programmes, budgets and service-delivery models rather than treated as stand-alone or temporary interventions.
 - **Invest and sustain AGYW community-led services.** Provide long-term financing for community-led organisations and networks that reach AGYW, particularly those living with HIV and those experiencing stigma, discrimination and other forms of marginalisation. Moving beyond short-term projects towards predictable, flexible and long-term financing that enables young people and their organisations to build strong institutions, retain capacity and sustain their impact.
 - **Make health services gender-transformative and responsive to AGYW.** Invest in services that are accessible, confidential, affordable and free from stigma while actively addressing gender inequality, gender-based violence and harmful norms that affect health-seeking behaviours and outcomes.
 - **Resource participation, not just representation.** Meaningful engagement requires investment. Fund the time, capacity building, accessibility, connectivity, transportation and other resources AGYW need to participate fully and equitably in decision-making spaces.
 - **Build sustainability from the beginning.** Every programme for AGYW should have a clear pathway for local ownership, integration into existing systems, continued financing and leadership by the communities and young people it serves.
 - **Turn AGYW voices into accountable action.** Listening is only meaningful when young people's recommendations influence policies, budgets, programmes and services. Establish mechanisms to show AGYW how their input has shaped decisions and to hold institutions accountable for commitments made.

AGYW should not have to depend on temporary projects to access essential services, nor should they have to repeatedly fight for a place in decisions about their own health and lives.

This International Adolescent Health Week, we are calling for a shift from **consultation to shared decision-making, from short-term projects to sustainable investment, and from programmes designed for AGYW to systems built with and led by AGYW.**



**INVEST IN OUR LEADERSHIP. INTEGRATE OUR PRIORITIES.
SUSTAIN OUR SOLUTIONS. SHARE DECISION-MAKING POWER.**

