



# Investing in adolescent girls: Mapping global funding patterns from 2016-2023 and beyond

A summary for young advocates

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**About GAGE:**

The Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme combines quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation work to explore adolescents' gendered experiences with the aim to identify what strategies are most effective in transforming adolescent girls' and boys' lives at specific moments during the second decade of life.

**About AGIP:**

The Adolescent Girls Investment Plan (AGIP) is a global, intergenerational, feminist coalition of 18 member organisations, co-chaired by Plan International and Akili Dada. AGIP members collaborate to drive political commitment, accountability, and evidence-informed investment to create positive impact for adolescent girls in all their diversity, and advocate for the meaningful engagement, resourcing, and co-leadership of adolescent girls.

**About the Investing in adolescent girls research series 2016-2023:**

The GAGE-AGIP *Investing in adolescent girls* research series responds to the urgent need for a detailed and up-to-date understanding of funding to support the wellbeing and development of adolescent girls globally. By tracking official development assistance (ODA) funding from 2016 – 2023 and making predictions on how the data may be allocated in the future, this trend analysis highlights key changes in donor investments in adolescent girls over time, and maps how funds are thematically distributed.

The findings show that funding for adolescent girls' wellbeing is inconsistent and often influenced by politics. As a result, many girls who face multiple forms of disadvantage—such as girls with disabilities, girls who are displaced, and girls at risk of child marriage—are often left behind.

This GAGE-AGIP research helps hold donors accountable for how aid is used and highlights the urgent need for stronger advocacy and better evidence to increase funding for programmes that specifically support adolescent girls.

**To find out more:**

If you want to find out more about government investments in adolescent girls from 2016, read the GAGE-AGIP *Investing in adolescent girls* reports from 2016-2020 [here](#), the 2021 update [here](#), and the latest 2022 analysis [here](#). We are also planning to publish a brief that analyses projections on how ODA funding for adolescent girls might look over the coming years. Watch this space and get in touch to learn more!

**GAGE:****AGIP:****Suggested citation:**

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## Glossary

<b>AGIP</b>	The <b>Adolescent Girls Investment Plan</b> is a global coalition which works to advance evidence-informed commitment, accountability and investment for and with adolescent girls.
<b>Bilateral donors</b>	<b>Bilateral donors</b> are country government agencies that invest in aid which flows directly to another country (called the recipient country).
<b>DAC Gender Equality Marker</b>	The <b>Gender Equality Marker</b> is a tool adopted by OECD's Development Assistance Committee to check whether aid is invested in programmes that advance gender equality. If the marker score of a project is 0, it means that the project does not target gender equality. If it is 1, the project takes into account gender equality but it is not its main target. If it is 2, it means that the investment aims at improving gender equality among its main objectives.
<b>GAGE</b>	The <b>Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence</b> programme is led by a research consortium which follows the lives of twenty thousand adolescent girls and boys in Africa, Asia and the Middle East over a decade (2016-2026) to find out what works to support young people during adolescence and as they transition into early adulthood.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	The term <b>intersectionality</b> refers to how different characteristics (gender, race, class, disability, refugee status, location, and others) intersect and lead to layers of discrimination.
<b>LMICs</b>	<b>Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)</b> are countries where average incomes are lower compared to high-income countries. The World Bank groups countries into low-, lower-middle-, and upper-middle-income categories based on income levels.
<b>Multilateral organisations</b>	<b>Multilateral organisations</b> are organisations which include at least three countries or other actors, that collaborate in finding joint solutions to specific issues by adopting policies, making decisions and taking action. The United Nations (UN), for instance, is a major multilateral organisation.
<b>NGOs</b>	An organisation is defined as a " <b>non-governmental organisation</b> " (NGO) whenever it works independently from a government and has humanitarian goals. Such organisations also work without generating profit.

ODA	<p><b>Official Development Assistance (ODA)</b> is broadly used to refer to international aid. It includes, according to the OECD, all funding that aims at supporting a country economically in its development.</p>
OECD	<p>The <b>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</b> is an international organisation which seeks to find solutions to social, economic and environmental issues by producing new research and consulting key decision-makers.</p>
OECD-CRS	<p>The <b>Creditor Reporting System (CRS)</b> is the system built by the OECD to ensure that financial information regarding individuals and organisations is available and easily exchanged.</p>
OECD-DAC	<p>The <b>Development Assistance Committee (DAC)</b> is an entity born from the OECD where many states which donate the largest amount of international aid discuss issues regarding aid and development priorities.</p>
SDGs	<p>The <b>Sustainable Development Goals</b> are the 17 goals set in the Agenda 2030, the UN's roadmap to end poverty and achieve a better life for everyone by 2030. At its core, the aim is to "leave no one behind" – eradicating poverty, and ending all forms of discrimination and exclusion, particularly for the most vulnerable.</p>
UNICEF	<p>The <b>United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)</b> is the agency of the United Nations that brings international aid to children and adolescents all around the world.</p>
WHO	<p>The <b>World Health Organization</b> is the agency of the United Nations that works on topics connected to health. In its work, it also deals with adolescent health around the world.</p>

## Summary Box

GAGE and AGIP have tracked and analysed how international aid funding for adolescent girls has changed over time since 2016.

While total funding for adolescent girls has increased in dollar amounts, its percentage share of overall aid has declined. Although adolescent girls make up 20–30% of the population in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), only 4.71% of bilateral aid in 2023 was targeted for them.

At the same time, gender equality as a key outcome is becoming less central to donor priorities, and girls with disabilities and youth-led organisations continue to receive limited funding.

Most funding for adolescent girls is linked to SDG 4 (Education), SDG 3 (Health), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 1 (No Poverty), although investment levels across these goals have shifted over the years.

Between 2025 and 2027, total ODA funding for adolescent girls (in dollar terms) is projected to decline each year, reaching its lowest level in five years by 2027.

To strengthen investments in adolescent girls, we recommend improving how funding trends are tracked through designing and applying better indicators, scaling up resources through stronger public–private partnerships, and directing funds toward the most marginalised girls, including through youth-led organisations so young people can lead and shape their own solutions.

# Introduction

## 1. Adolescence: Risk, opportunities, and interventions

Investing in adolescent girls can lead to impressive gains for adolescent girls themselves, their families, their communities and countries. As of 2025, there are approximately 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 around the world, and most of them (90%) live in low-and-middle income countries (LMICs) (UN, 2025). It is well-evidenced and well-known that adolescence and youth is a time of major changes—social, physical, cognitive and emotional—that shape the rest of a person’s life (Patton et al., 2018). This period is marked by explosive growth and development and is seen as a key “window of opportunity” because it is a time when young people are most likely to benefit from support and interventions (Sheehan, 2017; Baird, 2025). This stage of life provides

a critical opportunity to nurture skills, capabilities, and aspirations—supporting adolescents to become innovators, practitioners, advocates, and leaders—and to lay the foundation for lifelong wellbeing.

Although adolescence is also typically viewed as a time when young people gain more independence - this is not the reality for many. Adolescent girls across LMICs, in fact, often face increased restrictions on their behaviour and mobility. For many girls, adolescence is shaped by crushing gender norms that can make it harder for them to achieve their full potential (Harper et al., 2018; Hunt, 2006). Many girls must live through interrupted education, may be restricted on where they can go in their communities and who they can interact with in-person and online due to risks of harassment and violence, and may also face limited opportunities to interact with peers and friends. For many adolescent girls, adolescence is a time in which their world shrinks (Baird et al, 2021).



However, successful programmes and interventions do exist for adolescent girls, and have the potential to support the full set of adolescent girls' capabilities (Pincock and Jones, 2025; UNICEF, 2022). Also, listening to adolescent girls, working alongside them and providing the support they need, can also help overcome many challenges they face and break cycles of poverty, benefiting not only the girls themselves but also their communities (Pereznieto and Harding, 2013). For these programmes to work, and for this vision to be maintained, sufficient investment levels are critical.

Although there has been more attention and advocacy momentum on adolescent girl priorities in policies and funding over the last decade, there is still limited data on how much money is actually being invested in adolescent girls' wellbeing. Historically, it has been very difficult to know exactly how much money is being invested in programmes for adolescent girls because the data is not very consistent or accessible. In particular, accessing data that reflects how much funding is spent per age group and on different groups of young people (for example, those who were married as children or those with disabilities) is challenging. This makes it difficult to understand which young people are truly benefiting from the money that is meant to support them.



Primary school girls playing in Somali, Ethiopia. © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

## 2. Context snapshot: Where is the money for adolescent girls' wellbeing?

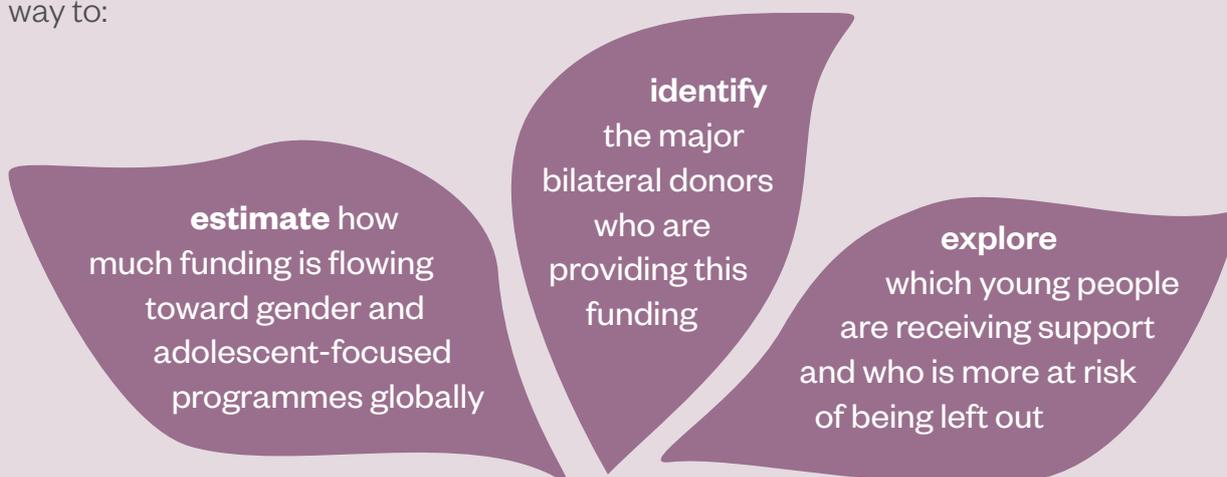
The global funding directed to development and humanitarian efforts at large is currently undergoing significant threats and cuts. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that in 2024 international aid fell by over 7% in real terms, signalling the first drop after five years of consecutive growth (OECD, 2025). Moreover, an alarming number of political announcements made by governments since January 2025 predict that overseas aid investment will fall dramatically over the coming years.

Historically, cuts to international aid have often affected women and adolescent girls the most (Devonald, et al, 2023c; Plan International, 2025). As funding for the empowerment of adolescent girls is poised

to drop in 2026 and beyond, the progress achieved through previous decades risks being reversed, with potentially devastating effects for the most vulnerable girls across communities.

### 3. About this document

Given these challenges, but recognising the importance of investing in adolescent girls, the Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence (GAGE) in partnership with the Adolescent Girls Investment Plan (AGIP) has sought to fill the gaps on understanding investment flows to adolescent girls' wellbeing. GAGE has tried and tested a robust way to:



In this report, we share a summary of the results from our investment trend analysis from 2016 to 2023 and beyond. The goal is to give a clear picture of where funding for adolescent girls' development is going and help guide future investment decisions. This summary has been created to empower young leaders with clear information to understand aid flows to girls and to advocate for change.

*“I think this document will be very useful for young advocates, especially those working on gender equality, education, disability inclusion, and youth leadership. It gives strong data that young people can use to advocate, question donors, and hold governments accountable.”*

- Mary, South Sudan, Youth Reference Group Member,  
Plan International (AGIP Member)





## Methodology: How did we gather and analyse the data?

To map investments focused on adolescent girls, we analysed data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Creditor Reporting System (OECD-CRS), the largest source of information on official development assistance (ODA). ODA is the amount of development money, or “aid” which

governments pledge and disburse. Next, we reviewed the top 10 bilateral donors for gender equality: Canada, EU Institutions, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States across all Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). This list of donors was selected from the Donor Tracker’s list of top 10 gender equality donors from 2019 when we started our analysis (Donor Tracker, 2019).

To identify ODA targeting women and girls, we used the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker (GenderNet), which scores projects on a three-point scale:

**0 not targeted**

gender equality is not an objective

**1 significant**

gender equality is an important, but not primary, objective

**2 principal**

gender equality is the main objective

For our study, we included only projects that scored 1 or 2. We also searched project titles and descriptions for key words to find programmes specifically aimed at adolescents. Through the descriptor from the OECD-CRS, we identified and categorised projects or programmes that had a clear focus on children, adolescents, youth and young people. Within these ranges, we used a keyword search to explore investment trends for particularly marginalised groups, including adolescent girls living with disabilities. Finally, we also used keyword searches to identify funding for programmes that were girl- or youth-led.

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Please see Annex 1 for a full list of the search terms we utilized.

# Findings



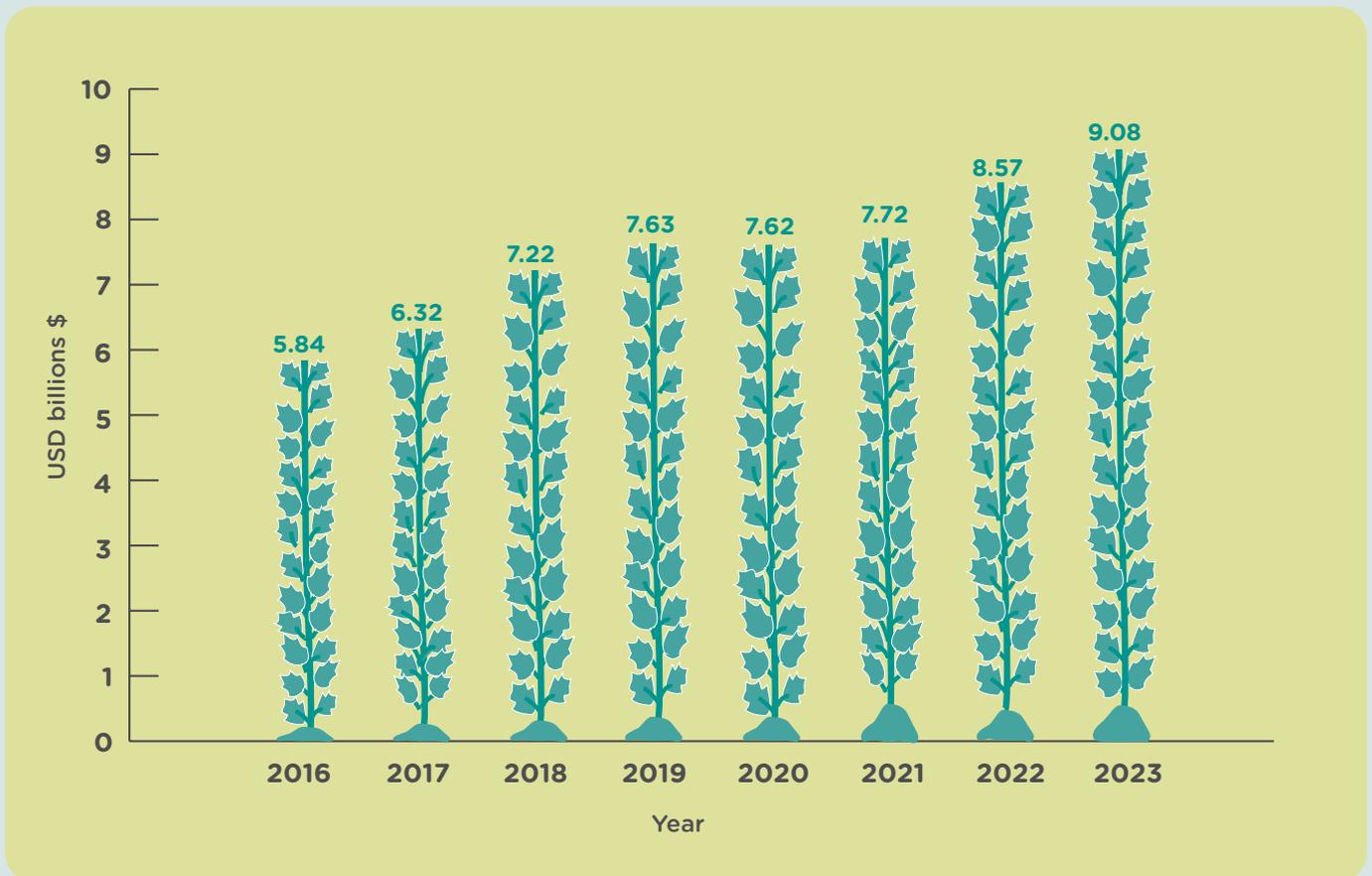
## 1 Overall findings

### 1.1 What looks good: Increased funding allocations for adolescent girls

We mapped global investments disbursed to adolescent girls' wellbeing from 2016-2023\*. Our review shows that funding by dollar amounts aimed at supporting gender equality and adolescent girls' wellbeing increased

notably in 2023 — rising to \$9.08 billion, up from \$8.57 billion in 2022, and significantly up from \$5.84 billion in 2016 when we started our analysis. At first glance and on the surface, this appears to be great news for adolescent girls.

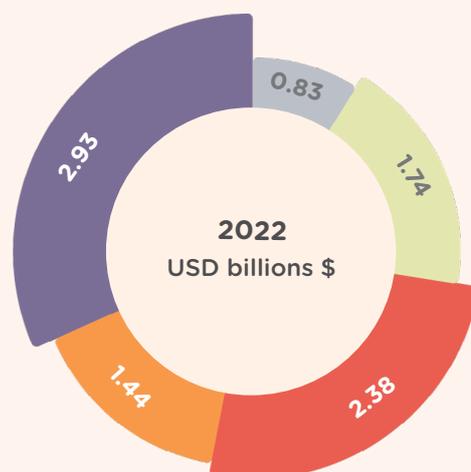
Figure 1: Amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2016–2023



Other bright spots were revealed by our analysis. While age-categories remain difficult to decipher from the OECD-CRS database (see section 1.2.2), we do note that funding for projects specifically naming adolescents as an age bracket in the funding project descriptions grew from \$1.4 billion in 2022 to \$2.2 billion in 2023. Support for the

age-bracket “youth” decreased, from \$2.9 billion in 2022 to \$2.2 billion in 2023, but funding aimed at “older children” rose from \$2.3 billion to \$3.4 billion. These figures and increases match the overall upward trend in gender- and adolescent-targeted aid.

Figure 2: Gender and adolescent targeted ODA in \$ billions, by age category, 2022 and 2023



Funding for adolescents rose from \$1.4B in 2022 to \$2.2B in 2023.

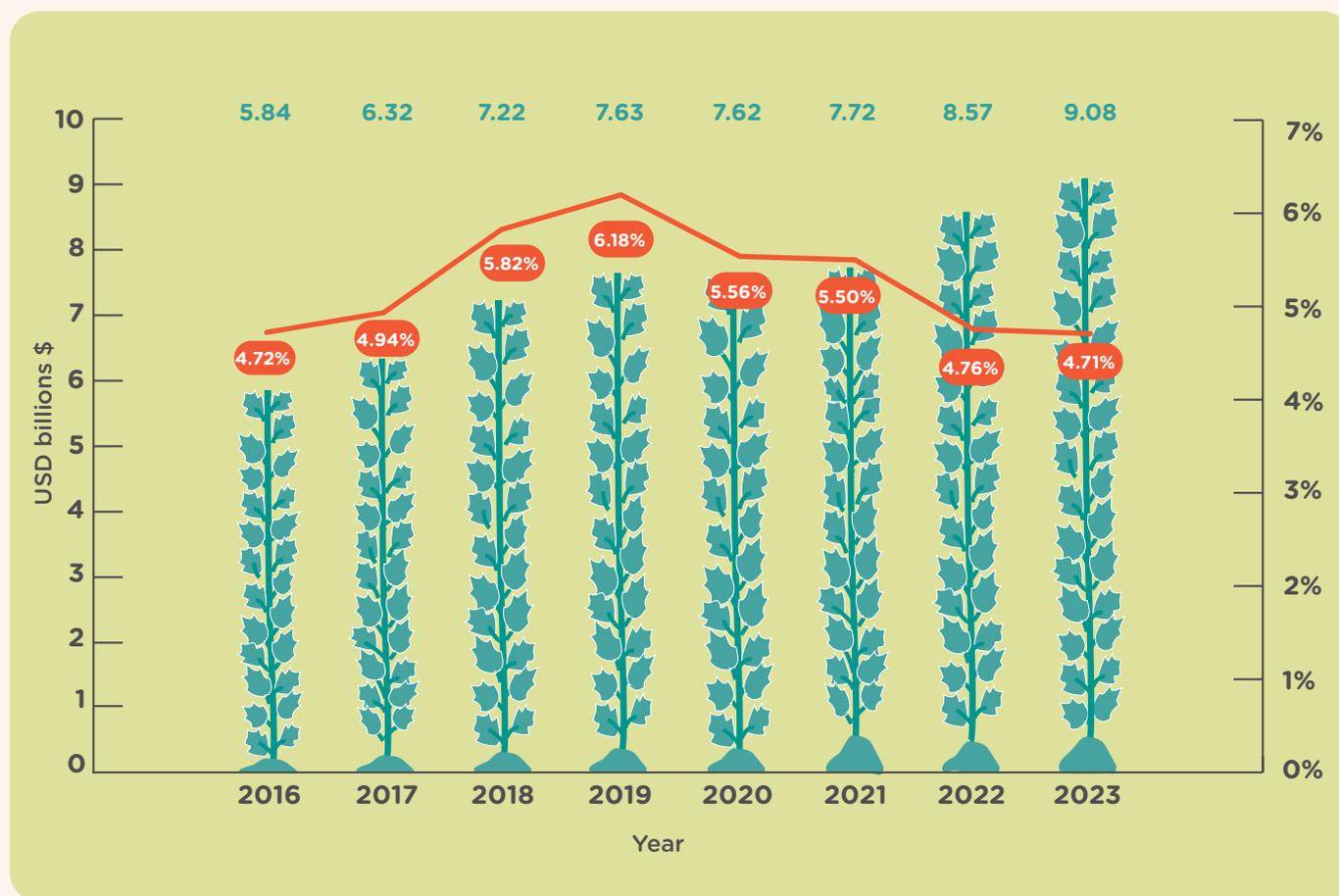
- Youth
- Adolescent
- Older Children
- All
- Unspecified

## 1.2. What looks worrying:

### 1.2.1 Adolescent girls are slipping down the global priority agenda

However, the reality is more complex: even though the actual dollar amount of investment has indeed increased significantly over time, funding flowing to adolescent girls' wellbeing as a share of overall aid is in fact decreasing. In 2023, funding dropped to 4.71% continuing a four-year downwards slide from its 2019 high of 6.18%. In other words, the proportion of gender- and adolescent-focused funding has steadily decreased over the past four years, compared to investments in other priorities or other population groups. When exploring the funding trends of our list of gender-equality donors, adolescent girls are clearly slipping down the global priority agenda.

Figure 3: Amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2016–2023



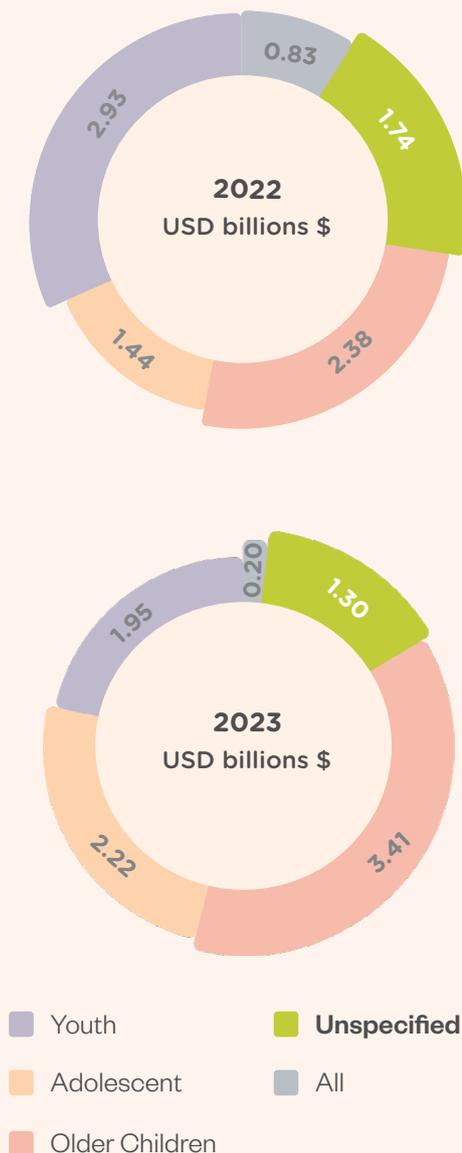
Percentage of total aid (%)

Amount in billions (\$)

## 1.2.2 Lack of age-and-gender disaggregated data is worsening

Our data analysis also explored which specific age groups this funding is reaching. As seen in past iterations of this study (Devonald, et al, 2023a and 2023b; Neumeister et al, 2024), the data in the OECD-CRS is not straightforward to decode as there is no inclusion of an adolescent-age marker to understand how ODA is flowing by age. Many funded projects use more encompassing terms such as “young people” or “girls,” which unfortunately do not explain exactly *who* is being targeted. In 2022, this kind of generalized language showed up in about 19% of gender- and youth-focused funding. In 2023, it is still considerable with it occurring in 14% of this funding, a sign that the lack of precision—and lack of transparency—remains significant.

**Figure 4: Gender and adolescent targeted ODA in \$ billions, by age category, 2022 and 2023**



### 1.2.3 Fewer projects are placing gender equality at the centre

Despite some positive shifts (see section 1.1), there is reason to be cautious. The share of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA funding that treats gender equality as a main priority (that is, that which uses a ‘gender priority’ tag) has seen uneven patterns over time. While gender equality as a principle objective of funding increased from 2016 – 2020 (where it reached a high of 1.2% in 2020), it fell steadily

from 2021 – 2022 (going from approximately 1.2% in 2020 to 0.9% in 2021 to 0.8% in 2022). 2023 saw no change, with the percentage staying at 0.8%. Even with more money going toward adolescents and youth overall, fewer projects are placing gender equality at the centre — hinting at a shift away from one of the most important areas of impact.



Figure 5: Amount and percentage of gender - and adolescent targeted ODA with gender principal tagging



Amount in billions (\$) Percentage of total aid (%)

## 2 Findings breakdown by donor, sector, channel of delivery and recipients

### 2.1. Donor

The donor landscape has changed significantly over the time horizon of this review (2016-2023), but we kept tracking the same top ten gender equality donors. The below gif showcases how the top three donors shift in order by amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA from 2020 to 2023.



Overall, we see that between 2020–2023, the three donors that provided the largest amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA varied over time, as illustrated in the table below:

		2020	2021	2022	2023
Rank by \$USD amount spent on adolescent girls	1	UK (\$ 1.4 billion)	Canada (\$ 1.2 billion)	Canada (\$ 1.8 billion)	United States (\$ 2.6 billion)
	2	Germany (\$ 1.3 billion)	Germany (\$ 1.2 billion)	Germany (\$ 1.5 billion)	Canada (\$ 2.0 billion)
	3	France (\$ 1.1 billion)	France (\$ 1.1 billion)	France (\$ 1.3 billion)	Germany (\$ 1.2 billion)

It is important to highlight that between 2020 and 2021, Canada increased its gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA from \$1.02 billion to \$1.22 billion, climbing from the fourth place in the list of top donors to the first, and again increasing in 2022 to \$1.82 billion and again in 2023 to \$2.6 billion. At the same time, the UK went from being the top donor on gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2020, down to 5th place in 2021 and further down to 6th place in 2022 and 2023. This is partly a result of the UK’s political decision to cut their international aid spend more

generally, which gravely impacts adolescent girls as a cohort.

What also stands out is this: while the top three to four donors boosted their gender- and adolescent-targeted aid over time, the other six in the top 10 list did not. Most of those are European countries, along with Japan — a shift that may reflect Europe’s wider move towards more conservative politics and changing priorities across the region (Neumeister et al, 2025).

While the above list explores total dollar amounts disbursed, the top three countries in relative terms (that is, those which proportionally spent more on adolescent girls’ wellbeing) were as follows:

	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Rank by % of ODA spent on adolescent girls</b> ①	Canada (26%) *	Canada (28%)	Canada (31%)	Canada (28%)
②	Sweden (20%)	Sweden (22%)	Sweden (21%)	Sweden (20%)
③	Norway (12%)	Norway (13%)	Norway (9%)	Norway (11%)

There is great variation in the percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA out of donors’ total ODA. What is clear from the chart above is that over time, adolescent girls have remained high investment priorities in Canada, Sweden and Norway.

\* this means that 26% of Canada’s total ODA was spent on projects/programmes that were gender- and adolescent-targeted



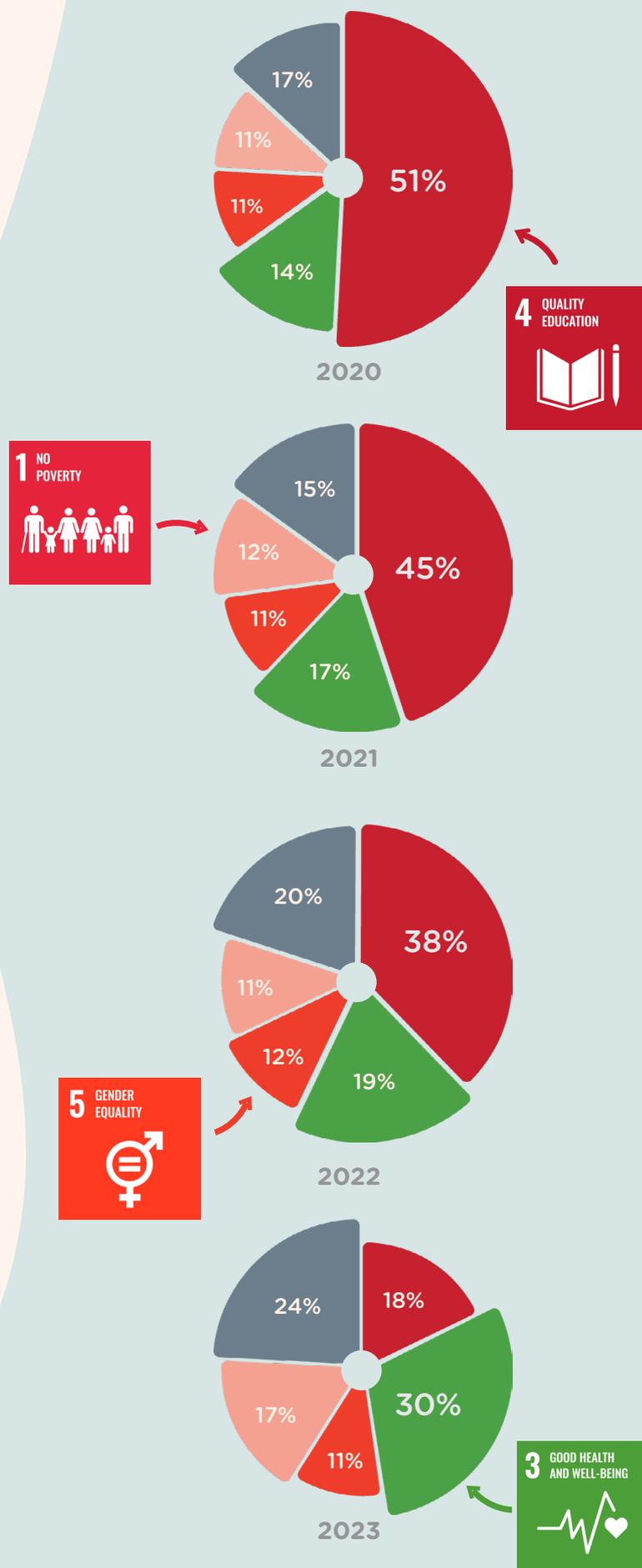
## 2.2 Sector

The mapping also provides a picture of which issues donors are investing in the most. When we look at funding by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), we see that the top thematic priorities receiving the bulk of gender- and adolescent-targeted funding are Education (SDG 4), Health (SDG 3), Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Poverty Alleviation (SDG 1).

However, the amounts flowing to these sectors changed significantly over time, particularly for Education which saw a steady decline in allocated funding.

- SDG 1 No Poverty
- SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing
- SDG 4 Quality Education
- SDG 5 Gender Equality
- Other SDGs

**Figure 7: Rates of % change of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2020-2023**



As noted in Figure 7, in 2023, most gender-and adolescent-targeted funding went to SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) at 30%, followed by SDG 4 (Quality Education) at 18%, SDG 1 (No Poverty) at 17%, and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) at 11%.

Compared with 2022, this data shows a clear and significant decline in the share of funding related to Quality Education (SDG 4), which fell sharply from 38% in 2022 to 18% in 2023

(and even more sharply from 2020 when the share was 51%). This represents a substantial shift away from education-focused funding and interventions for adolescent girls. Over the same period, Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3) increased markedly from 19% to become the dominant focus in 2023, while No Poverty (SDG 1) also rose from 11% to 17%, indicating increased prioritisation. Gender Equality (SDG 5) remained broadly stable, with only a minor decrease from 12% to 11%.



Adolescent girls in school in Nuwakot, Nepal © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

## 2.3 Channel of delivery

Our most recent mapping analyses from 2022 and 2023 also looked at the kinds of organizations receiving ODA funds. The biggest beneficiaries of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA were by far multilateral organisations, followed by NGOs and civil society groups, and finally public sector institutions. Only a small slice went to the private sector, public-private partnerships, or teaching and research organisations.

### ③ What the findings tell us about gender and intersectionality

#### 3.1 Leaving No One Behind: Why adolescents with disabilities need more support

The global promise enshrined in the Agenda 2030 and accompanying SDG framework to “*leave no one behind*” means the global community has pledged to look closely at, and pay attention to, intersectionality – that is, how different forms of disadvantage overlap. Despite this, adolescent girls with disabilities are too-often a marginalized group at risk of being left behind. A recent UNICEF-WHO publication highlights that one in ten children and adolescents live with a disability (UNICEF

and WHO, 2023). Evidence also highlights that adolescent girls living with a disability have poorer outcomes across many domains compared to their peers without a disability and compared to adolescent boys living with (or without) a disability (Abu Hamad et. al., 2025; Presler-Marshall, 2025). Adolescent girls need to be prioritised in policy and programming and adequately funded to meet their intersecting needs.

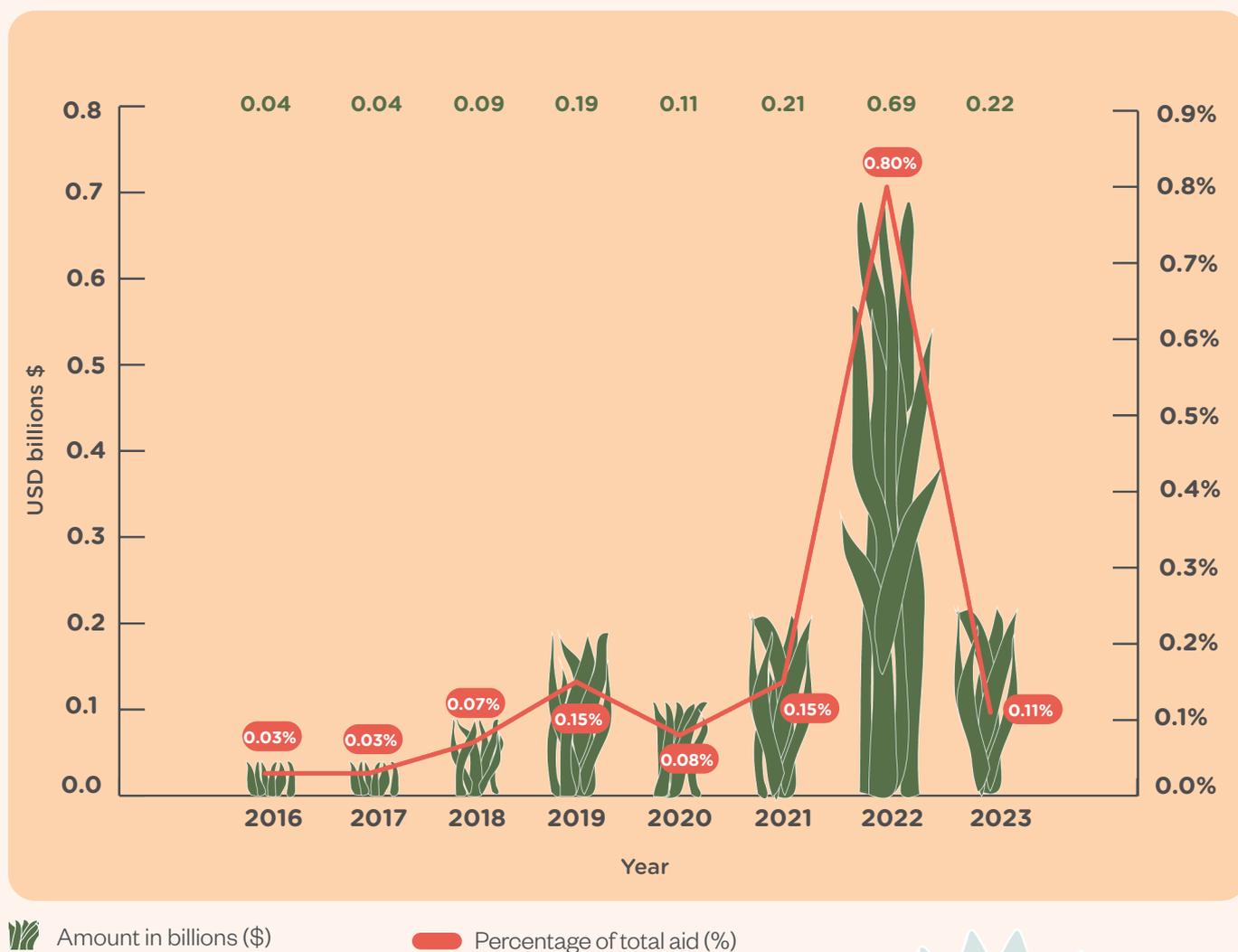


Young Turkman girls in Jordan © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2026

When we look at funding support for adolescent girls with disabilities, we see that this is still tiny compared to their total numbers. In 2020, \$106 million gender-and adolescent ODA identified in this review included adolescent girls with disabilities as a target population, accounting for just

0.08% of total ODA from the top 10 gender equality donors. By 2023, the amount of the gender-and adolescent ODA which targeted adolescent girls with disabilities was also low but did increase to \$217 million, amounting to 0.1% of total ODA from the list of donors.

**Figure 8: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, 2016–2023**



As we can see in the graph, the biggest shift for funding allocated to adolescent girls with disabilities came in 2022, when support jumped to \$689M, or 0.8% of total aid. Further research would be needed to unpack this finding, and whether a global commitment was made in 2022 that catalysed such a big improvement. Nonetheless, even the peak shown in 2022 is far from matching the real needs of adolescent girls living with disabilities around the world.

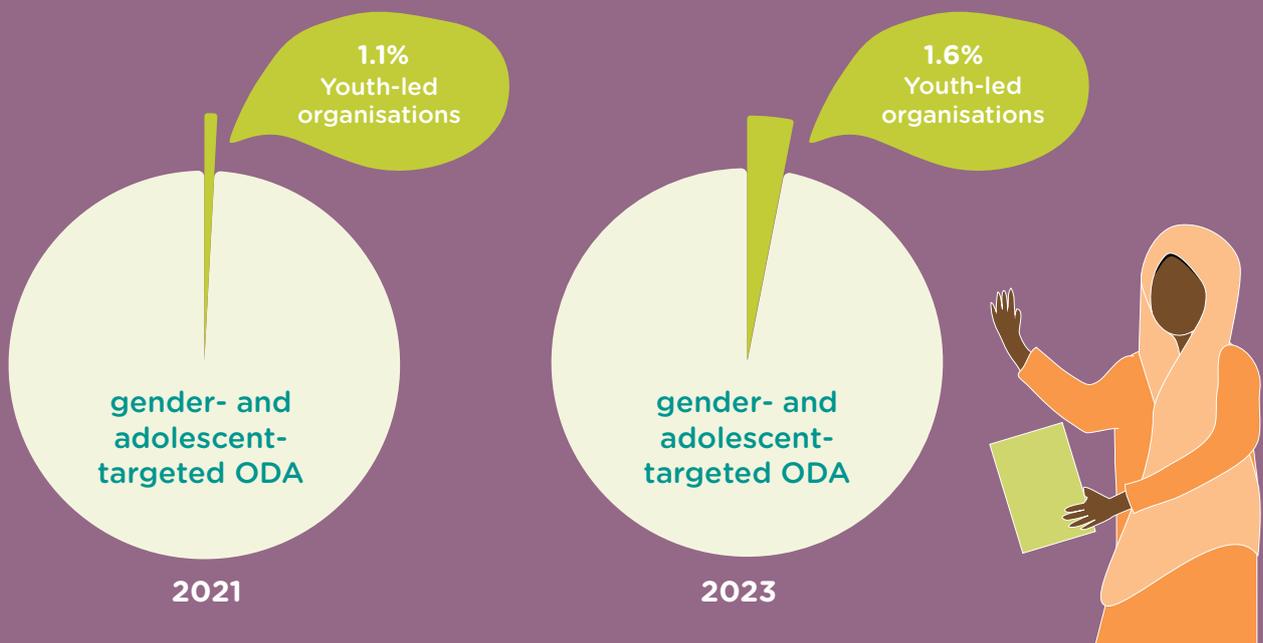
### 3.2 Funding to youth-led work

To make sure funding truly reflects young people’s priorities, young people themselves must have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their lives. Critically, there is growing political attention on the power of girl- and youth-led organising and activism to drive global development and gender equality. This has led to increased interest from donors and funders in how to best support girl- and youth-led organisations to advance social change and gender equality outcomes.

Youth-led organisations are key because they give young people real power and agency and,

often, the youth leaders act as role models for other girls and youth (Guglielmi et al, 2024). However, there is still limited research that fully recognises the unique experiences, leadership, and strengths of these groups, or the important role they play in creating social change and gender justice (Browne, 2025). To better support their work and activism, girl- and youth-led work needs to be properly funded through accessible resources so young people can lead change in their communities and beyond.

Even though donors often *talk* about supporting youth leadership, the money rarely follows. Community-based and youth-led organisations face a range of difficulties in accessing funding and most bilateral ODA funding gets channelled through larger agencies. In 2021, youth-led organisations received only \$87M, or 1.1%, of gender- and adolescent-targeted aid. This did marginally increase by 2023, reaching \$145.6 million, or 1.6% of gender- and adolescent-targeted aid.



## 4 Forecasting analysis: The future of funding for adolescent girls

While it remains essential to monitor ODA trends over time, it is equally important to recognize how significantly the development and humanitarian financing landscape shifted in 2025. That year marked a major turning point, as the United States government dismantled USAID and several other donor governments reduced their aid budgets to prioritize domestic spending (OECD, 2025; Kenny, C. and Sandeful, J., 2025). In light of these structural changes, we conducted a forecasting analysis to estimate the level of investment adolescent girls can expect in this increasingly uncertain funding environment.

Adopting a preliminary analysis of the OECD's 2024 ODA data, we calculated the average share of ODA allocated to adolescent girls between 2016 and 2024, which stands at 5.2%. Because official ODA figures for 2025 onward are not yet available, we projected donor countries' likely total ODA budgets for 2025, 2026, and 2027. Our analysis suggests that total ODA funding directed toward adolescent girls is likely to decline each year, reaching an estimated USD 8.2 billion by 2027. These projections assume that the 5.2% allocation share remains constant over time. If this trend holds, funding for adolescent girls would fall to its lowest level since 2021.

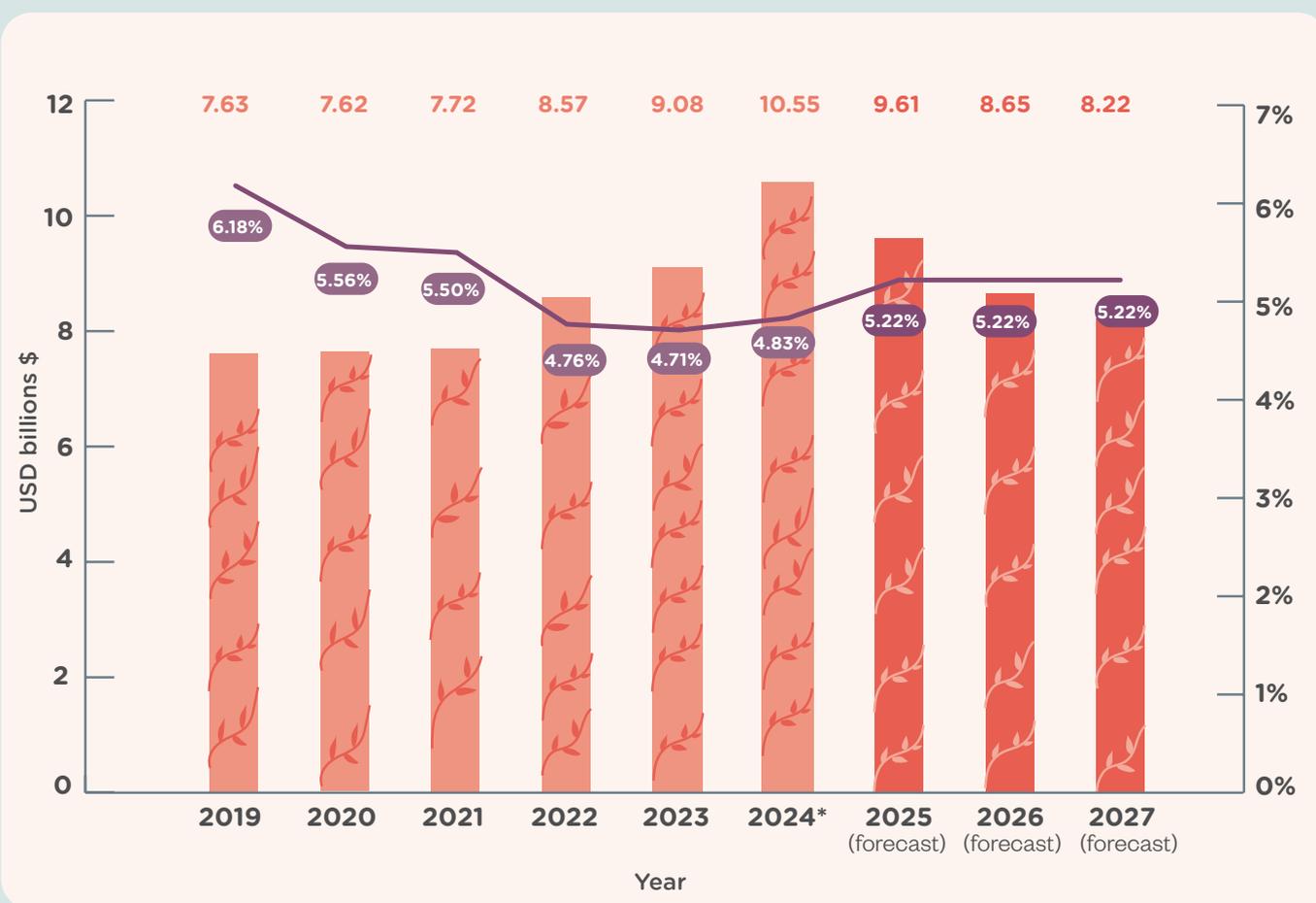
**Figure 9: Projection: ODA and gender-adolescent ODA over time**



\* Preliminary analysis of CRS 2024 data for gender and adolescent ODA

Our forecasting analysis indicates that the steepest funding declines are likely to come from EU Institutions, Canada, Japan, and the United States. Together, reductions from these donors alone could amount to an estimated USD 1.5 billion decrease in ODA for adolescent girls by 2027. At the same time, a number of other donors are demonstrating continued — and in some cases growing — commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Countries such as Switzerland, Australia, and Spain are emerging as important actors in this space, and their contributions will be critical to monitor as updated data becomes available.

**Figure 10: Projection: Levels of gender and adolescent ODA**



■ Amount in billions (\$)      ● Percentage of total ODA (%)

\* Preliminary analysis of CRS 2024 data for gender and adolescent ODA





## Key takeaways from 2016–2023 trends and 2025+ forecast

The GAGE–AGIP *Investing in adolescent girls* series maps the extent to which governments have supported adolescent girls from 2016 to 2023. Our findings show a clear mismatch: adolescent girls make up 20–30% of the population in many low- and middle-income countries, but only 4.71% of bilateral aid in 2023 was targeted for them — down from 4.76% in 2022, and down from a high of 6.18% in 2019.

Even more alarming, the share of funding that puts gender equality at the centre of programming has dropped since 2020 and

stayed static at 0.8% in 2022 and in 2023. This suggests that gender-focused work is losing priority at a time when girls need it most.

Looking across the SDGs, investments have been in flux. While education (SDG 4) stayed the top-funded goal between 2020 - 2022, funding towards education decreased overtime. In 2023, funding for adolescent girls' education dropped behind allocations to health (SDG 3). Other sectors like poverty reduction, and gender equality continued to receive significant support though must be monitored over time.

Ever since our first ODA funding analysis in 2016, most ODA continues to reach young people through multilateral organisations, NGOs, and civil society groups. But overall, very little funding reaches two especially important areas:

adolescents with disabilities  
(0.1% of all aid)

youth-led organisations (1.6% of  
gender-and- adolescent aid)

Despite all these challenges, there are positive trends worth noting:

Gender- and adolescent-targeted aid increased in dollar amounts from 2016 to 2023 — noteworthy was the global recovery following Covid-19.

Canada and Germany increased their support (in \$ amount) over time and the United States significantly increased their support (in \$ amount) in 2023.\*

\*It is however worth highlighting that this is prior to the United States' dismantling of USAID in 2025.



## Recommendations for policymakers and advocates

To ensure adolescents — especially adolescent girls — are prioritised in global development, and to increase and accelerate investments for the most marginalised adolescent girls, in line with the SDG commitments to *leave no-one behind*, we propose the following priorities to donors, the data-community, policy-makers and governments:

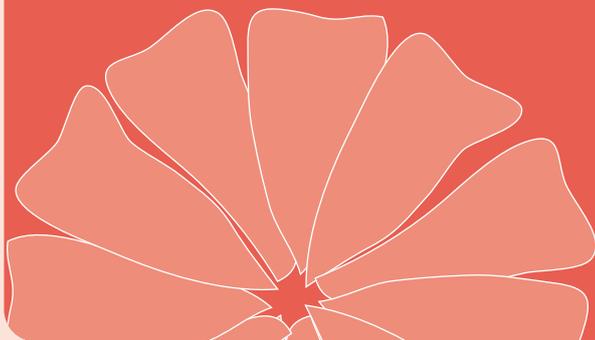
**Create** an adolescent-specific marker (ages 10–19) in the OECD-CRS database so funding can be tracked accurately.

**Direct** more funding to youth-led organisations so young people themselves can shape solutions.

**Increase** funding for adolescent girls with disabilities, who face multiple and complex barriers.

**Strengthen** public sector and public-private partnerships to make support more varied and accessible.

**Keep** investing in research to track commitments and hold donors accountable — including conducting similar research trends with a wider array of actors like philanthropic foundations, feminist funds, and multilateral donors.



It is pivotal that policymakers continue investing in adolescent girls' wellbeing. Failure to invest would put the lives of the most marginalised girls at severe risk, undermining years of hard-won progress on gender equality and having potential negative knock-on effects for future generations.



## Everyone has a part to play to ensure that adolescent girls continue to be supported through investments!

-  Advocates should call for investments to flow to adolescent girls' wellbeing, especially targeting those most marginalised, including girls with disabilities, and for decision-makers to be accountable to their funding commitments.
-  Research institutions should ensure that data is disaggregated and gathered to accurately track funding and ensure that donors are held accountable to adolescent girls.
-  Decision-makers should leverage partnerships between public institutions and private organisations, to ensure that funding comes from a variety of sources and provides long-term, sustainable support to impactful girl-centred projects.

Together, we can make sure that adolescent girls around the world get the political attention and appropriate investment that they need to thrive, in all their diversity.



Students participating in a school club, Rwanda © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026



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# Annex

## Annex 1: Search terms

When searching for gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, we coded project/programmes focused on children only as 1, projects/programmes clearly focused on adolescents as 2, and projects/programmes focused on youth only as 3. Programmes that use unspecific terminology such as ‘young people’ or ‘girls’ were coded as unspecified. Projects/programmes that focused on children, adolescents and youth were coded as ‘all’.

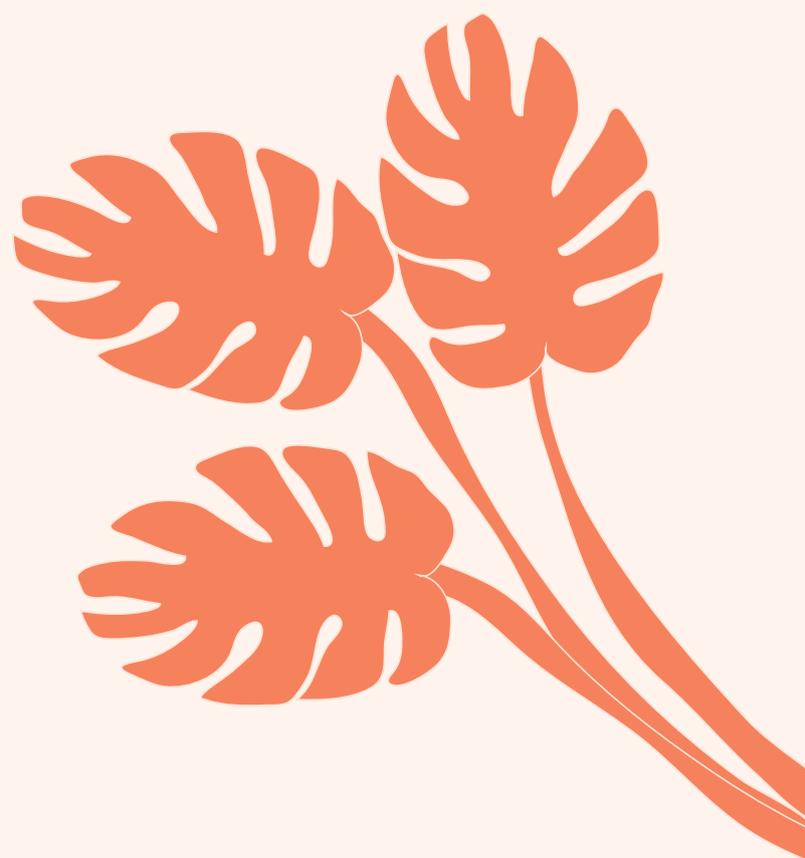
<i>Inclusion terms</i>		
<b>Gender and age terms</b>	<b>Adolescent specific sectors</b>	<b>Disability</b>
Adolescent(s)	Primary/secondary	Disab*
Adolescence	Child/early/marriage/CEFM	Handicap
Girl(s)	FGM/female genital mutilation	Pwd
Youth		Blind/visual
Young		Deaf/hearing
Daughter(s)		Special needs/ inclusive education
Child		Learning difficulty/problem
Students		Impair*
Teenage		Special needs
Jeunesse/Fille		Autism
Enfant		
Jeunes		
Juventud		
Chica		
Muchachas		
Niñas		

### *Specific sectors to include*

Education		
Unspecified		
Secondary education		
Post-secondary		

### *Exclusion terms*

Early/grade	Young/small child	Nutrition/Vitamin A/feeding
Early childhood	Under 5/five 2/two 'under the age of'	Child birth/child bearing-age
Pre-school	Months	Mother/maternal health
Kindergarten	First 1000/Thousand days	Stunting/underweight
Nursery	Infant/neonate/new-born	
Adult education	Years	





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## About GAGE

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a decade-long (2016-2026) longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit [www.gage.odi.org.uk](http://www.gage.odi.org.uk) for more information.

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Front cover: Girls dancing in Oromia, Ethiopia © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

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