

Dear World Leaders,

We are a group of girl-advocates and activists from around the world, actively involved in the *Generation Equality Forum (GEF)* and *the Action Coalitions*, and we are writing to call for the involvement of girls in the decision-making, goal-drafting, and implementation processes and to highlight the reforms we want to see in the world in the next five years. We are committed to the *2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)* and want to see girls included in the SDG and *Action Coalition* processes. We have attended and participated in many conversations and meetings about raising up the voices of girls. However, our input and the specific needs of girls are often not included in the final drafts. It is not enough to have conversations that include girls; girls must also be present from the initial stages of planning to the final draft. Girls bear the double burden of gender and age discrimination, and it is essential for leaders and relevant actors to acknowledge our unique voices and equip us to speak for ourselves. We are the future that begins today, and we want to have a part in creating a more equal and sustainable world for ourselves. As decision makers and leaders of Action Coalitions, we ask you to refer to this letter and the attached Conversation Circles Report to gain more input from girls.

Girls were left out of the creation of *the Action Coalitions* and the drafting of their blueprints and were often lumped in under ‘youth’ which does not fully represent our experience as it covers all young people 15-30. We call for the involvement of all girls in the discussions and decision-making processes, including girls in rural communities, at the local, national, and global levels. Inclusion of girls in these processes requires drafts, bills, and reports (and other relevant documentation) produced to be made more accessible to younger demographics to further accountability and transparency. We must be able to understand the texts to be able to dispute what is decided in the documents if needed. After the Generation Equality Forum, information about how the voices of girls have been included and incorporated in statements, action plans and accountability measures need to be disseminated to girls. Female populations deserve to be represented by female leaders, and included in the decisions that concern their voices, bodies, and futures. We request that you incorporate our voices and look for ways to have girls at all levels of decision making for the *Generation Equality Forum* and *Action Coalitions*. We deserve to be part of the final decision process, not only the discussions.

Young girls face a double barrier of gender and age, and poor socio-economic conditions and lack of education adds on to these barriers. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges girls face. Governments and organisations working for the cause of young girls must make sure girls know and understand their rights and protections, to be able to better access the policies designed for them. Girls from all economic, racial, ethnic and ability backgrounds should be given equal access to quality education, improved public education and safe spaces to learn so as to empower them to become economically independent decision makers. High schools and colleges must include digital, financial, and political literacy in their curricula, and must ensure that the contents and mediums of education are gender-neutral and non-discriminatory. Concepts of gender-equality should be consciously made a part of kindergarten and elementary school curriculum. Furthermore, schools should promote extracurriculars that are exercises in confidence-building and awareness-raising, like research projects, mock-

parliaments, and mock-UNs. Also, it is important for the holistic growth of young girls that they see female-representation in every sphere and career, and are conscious of strong women in positions of power from a young age, so as to deconstruct negative gender roles. Since menstruation compels girls without adequate sanitary resources to stay home for at least a week every month, public schools should have provisions to make these products accessible to their students. We also ask for the provision of no-interest loans for the purpose of higher education where girls do not have financial support.

Additionally, we emphasize the importance of digital literacy, reliable electricity, devices, and the internet, and how they can impact the way young girls interact, educate themselves, and participate in political discourse. Closing the digital gender divide and ensuring access to the internet is crucial. Access to the Internet is a human right and should be used for good to the maximum of its capacity in serving the cause of connecting girls with leaders, their representatives, and legal aid options available to them, particularly in conflict-affected and vulnerable communities. We need to universalize the internet as an essential commodity and make it safer and harassment-free for young girls through practical regulations to curb human trafficking and unconsented pornographic content, and make it easier for girls to report abusive content.

With regards to leadership for gender equality, we believe that it is important to include girls. We feel that our involvement in making final decisions is essential for making progress towards equality. Introducing girls to leadership at the grassroots level, such as in school councils, local businesses and local movements, will help us build the confidence for future political action and participation. This way, all voices will be heard, not just those in more elevated positions. Governments should also demonstrate accountability to girls by not only acknowledging the problems girls are facing but also by taking action in finding solutions to those issues. Girls demand transparency of governments and government officials in their actions, as well as the space to speak up and advocate for our rights. We want governments to follow up on the actions they are taking in response to our claims and inform us at every step. It is also important that you give us credit for our opinions and state that it is our voice which is calling for solutions for our present and future. In addition, governments should allocate resources and support for local, girl-led organizations.

World Leaders, we want our voices taken into account. We are Generation Equality, and we do not want to see another generation of voices go unheard. Our engagement and government accountability to girls around the world is necessary for any action plan to be truly effective, and once again, we urge you to take into account the calls of this generation of girl-activists, advocates, and leaders. We want to ensure that what is said does not just remain in this letter but that we are informed about actions taken. Empty words and empty promises must be replaced with actions towards real change. We ask that you listen to our issues, in our context, and our experiences. We need to change this society for our future sons and daughters. To do so, you must listen to the people who experience these issues first-hand, girls. We invite you to hear from more girls around the world by reading the Conversation Circles Report attached. We are girls, we are young, but we are strong. It is time for our voices to be taken into account and to make a difference. *Because if not now, when? If not us, then who?*

Sincerely,

Adreinne, Age 17, Philippines

Angela, Age 17, Mexico

Anoushka, Age 17, United Arab Emirates

Beatriz, 18, Portugal

Fatima, Age 16, Lebanon

Hiya, Age 18, Saudi Arabia

Katherine, Age 15, U.S.A.

Kimy,16,Mozambique

Leslie, Age 18, Peru

Mahi, Age 17, India

Prateeksha, Age 17, India

Rhea, Age 16, India

Riya, Age 18, India

Sanjana, Age 16, India

Suneri, Age 13, Nepal

Tatum, Age 14, U.S.A.

And the many other fellow global Girl-Advocates and Girl Activists who contributed to this letter