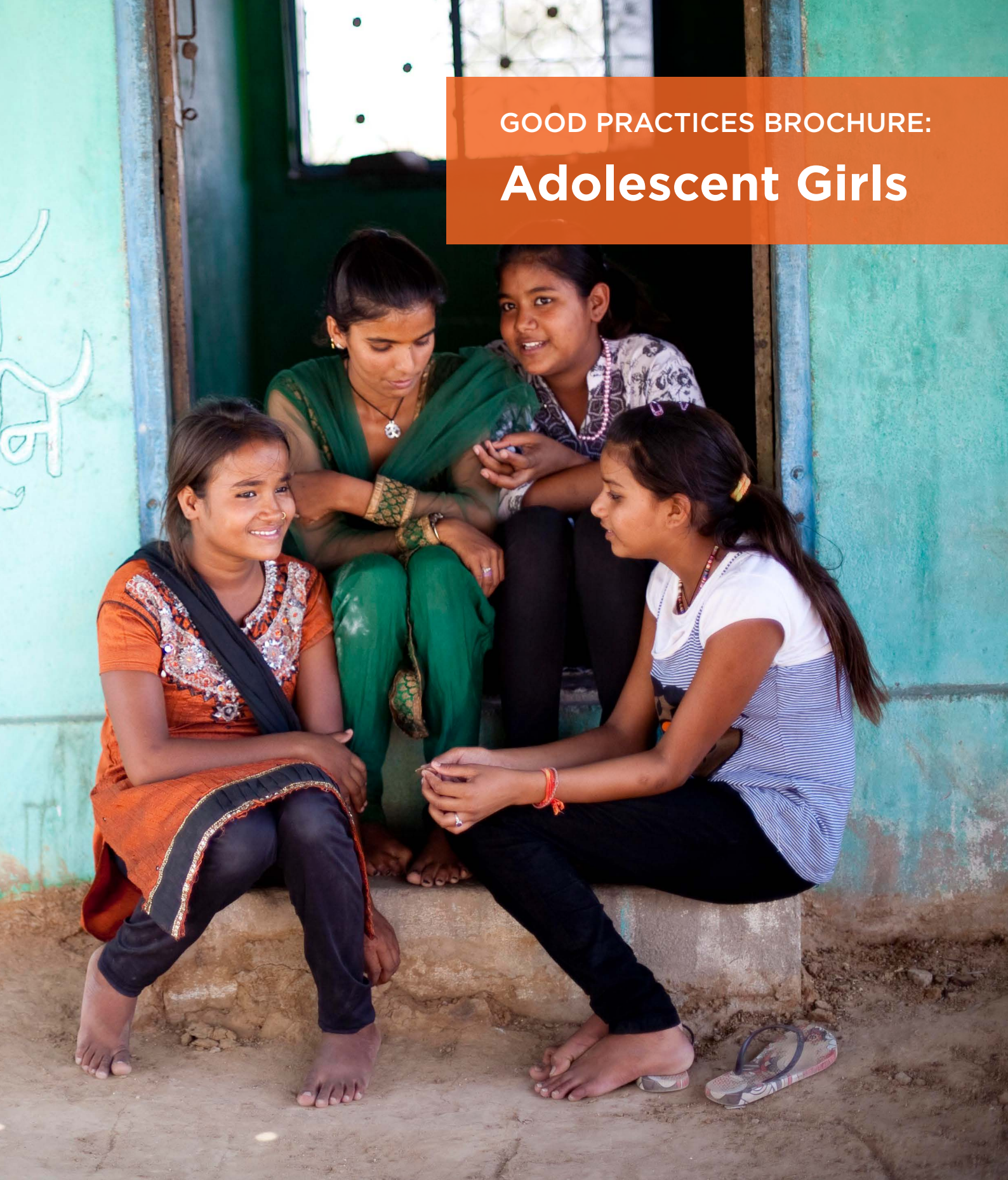


GOOD PRACTICES BROCHURE:  
**Adolescent Girls**



**GENDER**  
**IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION**  
Asia and the Pacific



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This Good Practices Brochure was produced by the Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, co-chaired by UN Women, CARE International and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

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## Introduction

Approximately 329 million adolescents reside in the East Asia and the Pacific, and they constitute a quarter of the world's adolescent population.<sup>1</sup> Coupled with this, South Asia is home to more adolescents—around 340 million—than any other region.<sup>2</sup> Never before has the global population had such a large share of young people, presenting an important opportunity to tap into their enormous potential to improve humanitarian action and build back better. Adolescents and youth are a vital positive force in emergency preparedness and response. While they have wide-ranging capacities they also have unique needs, and too often adolescents are lost between programming for children and programming for older adults.

In particular, adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by crises. They are the group most likely to drop out of school in times of crisis and economic hardship, leaving them at high risk of child labour, forced recruitment and child marriage. The current COVID-19 crisis heightens their vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV), unwanted pregnancy, HIV infection, maternal death and disability, rape, trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse. Adolescent girls lack freedom of movement and have limited access to education and health-care services. Many girls have taken on greater responsibilities in the household, yet they have little control over economic resources and limited knowledge and ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Therefore, compared to boys, girls are less likely to be able to meet their basic needs.

This brochure provides practical guidance on including adolescent girls in humanitarian programming and coordination by highlighting four case studies that illustrate good practices and examples in humanitarian settings in Asia and the Pacific.

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- 1 <https://www.unicef.org/eap/what-we-do/adolescent-development#:~:text=Potential%20for%20a%20better%20future,of%20the%20world's%20adolescent%20population.>
  - 2 [https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/demographics/.](https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/demographics/)

## Engaging adolescents and promoting girls' self-determination in the context of COVID-19



CARE's Tipping Point Initiative, currently implemented in Nepal and Bangladesh, aims to prevent child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) by promoting girls' self-determination and activism and working to change harmful social norms. As part of this process, CARE and its partners facilitate dialogue sessions with girls, boys, parents and community leaders on key topics related to gender equality and transformation and other protection issues. Community members also participate in discussion groups around key topics pertaining to the drivers of CEFM and prevailing social norms. A central goal of this programme is to provide space for adolescent girls to identify potential solutions to the challenges girls face and advocate for needed change.

As a result of COVID-19 and the mitigation measures that both countries put in place, girls participating in the project have faced significant mobility restrictions. In response to these challenges, programme staff adapted communication sessions to be done over the phone, allowing participants, including parents, to continue to connect with peers and critically engaged on girls' rights during this period. Of the participants who could be reached by phone, the attendance rate for remote sessions with adolescents in Bangladesh was 86 per cent, and 87 per cent in Nepal, representing a significant reach.

Despite the success of remote programming, its implementation required careful consideration of ethical and logistical issues in order to carry out activities while following the "do no harm" imperative. Programme staff obtained informed consent and assent from caregivers and girls prior to their involvement in remote sessions. Staff also worked to organize activities at a time that was convenient for most participants, and to ensure that they were aware of the updated schedule. Given the participatory nature of Tipping Point activities, facilitating girls' involvement and discussion was especially crucial. Since all sessions were taking place remotely, staff revised the programme content so it could be completed in a shorter time period during remote sessions. Staff also decided not to cover topics pertaining to violence, sexuality, or other sensitive issues, as doing so without the appropriate level of in-person support and follow-up care could expose girls to potential harm.



As findings from this model suggest, remote programming provided a valuable opportunity for girls and other participants to foster social connections and receive support during a period that would otherwise have been defined by relative isolation.

Reference: <https://care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CARE-USA-Adolescent-Girls-and-COVID-19-FINAL-Report.pdf>

The original case study was contributed by CARE International

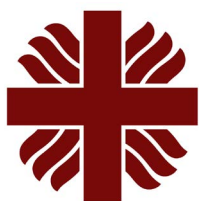
## Empowering youth to address gender-based violence in Myanmar



The rapid escalation in violence against women and girls as COVID-19 spread across the globe has been described as a “shadow pandemic.” In Myanmar, the prevalence of gender-based violence soared by 32 per cent in the first quarter of 2020, with intimate partners being the most common perpetrators. Intimate partner violence has been reported to be particularly common among adolescents. Harmful gender norms, which support early marriage and male dominance in relationships, combined with pandemic stressors of social isolation and financial hardship are contributing to increased violence against adolescent girls.



“Girls are often oppressed, as they have been told what to do and how to behave by their families from a young age. This can inhibit girls from reaching their potential.”  
Youth leader and mentor, Chye Ju Naw, Kachin State



To address the increasing rates of violence in Myanmar, UNICEF together with Plan International and Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (in Myitkyina, Kachin State), with financial support from the Government of Canada, are collaborating with youth across the country and engaging with them. The programme aims to empower adolescents and youth and engage communities in the protection of children and young people, particularly girls, from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse.

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*“As a young woman, I see the virtual campaign as an opportunity for us to acquire leadership skills and a first step for us to become great leaders.”*

Youth leader,  
Ma Ei Thandar Khaing,  
Nyaung-U,  
Mandalya region

The programme supports adolescent and youth leaders in educating their peers and communities about COVID-19, the risk of physical, sexual and emotional violence, as well as how to identify and report it in their communities. Young people are encouraged to support and protect each other, especially girls and young women, from various forms of abuse exacerbated by social isolation. Training has been provided to 125 youth leaders to use the virtual platform, U-Talk, to moderate small community peer groups. Live, private web chats provide safe spaces for young people, particularly girls, to connect with, confide in and support one another. While the campaign provides an opportunity for girls and young women to speak up about abuse, it also engages young men and boys and encourages them to get involved in peer support. The campaign goes one step further by educating peers, families and communities about these issues so that they are better able to support young people as needed.



The campaign and its allies, with a sun ally symbol and the youth-inspired motto “When they go quiet, we go loud,” have reached more than 4.2 million people to date. Adolescent and youth-friendly materials have been developed in both Myanmar and Kachin languages and shared through social media and other channels. There has been a focus on those living in remote areas, areas of economic disadvantage and in communities affected by conflict, with an interactive voice response platform allowing communities without Internet service to access information.

Video resource: [https://planinternational-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/conner\\_mcalary\\_plan-international-org/EQ\\_c366kSupEIMoSopn2048BzaU2cmpK1B6OB4i-P3YVvoQ?e=1Qmmjk](https://planinternational-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/conner_mcalary_plan-international-org/EQ_c366kSupEIMoSopn2048BzaU2cmpK1B6OB4i-P3YVvoQ?e=1Qmmjk)

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*“I think there is an important role for men and boys to play in changing attitudes toward gender-based violence. More boys need to join the sessions to get educated on this challenging topic and become involved in peer support.”*

Youth leader and mentor,  
Chye Ju Naw, Kachin State

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*“I call upon fellow youth leaders to share our newly acquired knowledge with our peers and communities so that we can protect one another.”*

Youth leader,  
Ma Htu Mai,  
Kachin State

The original case study was contributed by UNICEF

## Supporting girls' menstrual health and hygiene in Indonesia



Even in the best of times, inadequate water and sanitation services, discriminatory social norms and poverty make menstrual hygiene management difficult for many girls around the world. During emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these deprivations are exacerbated. Lockdowns, fractured supply chains, financial hardship and decreased access to services, are barriers to the facilities, supplies and information needed to manage menstruation with dignity. For girls, this can add to the stress and anxiety of an already traumatic situation and further restrict their freedom, choices and participation.

To better understand the situation for girls in Indonesia, UNICEF conducted a U-Report poll on women's and girls' experiences of menstruation during the pandemic. Results from the 5,806 respondents, half of whom were adolescent girls, were published on Menstrual Hygiene Day (28 May). More than one in four girls and young women (26 per cent) reported difficulties accessing sanitary supplies during the pandemic; 12 per cent due to mobility restrictions, 8 per cent because pads were not available or too expensive; and 7 per cent due to a lack of alternative information about sanitary pad availability. Nearly a third (31 per cent) of respondents also reported increased difficulty disposing of used pads during the pandemic, due to lack of disposal facilities or information. One in six girls and women (17 per cent) indicated they had more difficulty managing their periods during the COVID-19 outbreak, with 55 per cent reporting irregular periods and 28 per cent suffering increased menstrual pain. To resolve menstruation problems, girls were more likely to search online for support (50 per cent), despite not being confident in the reliability of information, rather than ask their parents (18 per cent).

UNICEF Indonesia also launched the Oky period tracker app on Menstrual Hygiene Day, with the theme "periods don't stop for pandemics". Developed by the UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific, Oky aims to empower girls and young women, reduce their stress and enable them to manage menstruation with confidence. Girls were at the centre of the Oky development process and directed the app's look and feel, functionality and features. The app enables them to track and plan for their periods and access trustworthy information about menstrual health and hygiene and sexual and reproductive health. Evidence-based

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*"Buying sanitary napkins become unaffordable, due to insufficient income..."*

18-year-old girl, Gorontalo





information about topics that are normally taboo is particularly valuable during the pandemic when girls' social interactions and access to counsel are even more restricted than normal. Health and safety information on COVID-19 was also included in Oky to provide young people with accurate information and help address misinformation. Boys have also been encouraged to download the app so they can also learn about menstruation and be more supportive of girls.

UNICEF Indonesia launched the Oky app in conjunction with a series of educational events and a social media campaign which reached nearly 1 million accounts. Capacity-building included online menstrual health and hygiene training for 200 adolescent health cadres, principals and teachers from 40 schools and madrasahs, and 50 health staff from Community Health Centres. UNICEF Indonesia also hosted a Menstrual Health and Hygiene Champions webinar and a competition for adolescents to share their experiences using Oky. Access to sanitary supplies was boosted through the distribution of 15,000 COVID-19 hygiene kits with disposable pads to vulnerable households.

## Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence: Best and promising practices from the Adolescent Girls Resiliency Programme, Indonesia



**Save the Children**

In September 2018 a series of earthquakes in Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, triggered a tsunami and landslides, causing extensive damage and casualties. In the hardest-hit districts, many people who survived the disaster lost their homes and livelihoods, and an extensive disaster relief effort is in place to respond to the wide range of humanitarian needs and challenges. There is a risk that the specific needs of adolescent girls will be overlooked unless they are participants in designing the disaster response.

During and after disasters, child protection risks increase. The risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, increases during emergencies, and adolescents may not know their rights or how to access protection mechanisms. Families may be unable to secure education for their children, and children are at greater risk of child labour and child marriage. Temporary shelters may not be safe for girls and children, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities may not meet their needs.

Save the Children carried out the Central Sulawesi Response Activity to provide girls with safe spaces to learn and play across five evacuation sites (three in Palu City, and one each in Donggala District and Sigi District). In all, the project reached 639 adolescents aged 12–17 years (621 girls and 18 boys). In each location, a girl-friendly space (GFS) was established to improve girls' well-being through the provision of psychosocial support and awareness-raising sessions on protection mechanisms and how to report concerns.

Working with local partner, Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik (YSTC), water, sanitation and hygiene facilities were established at the GFS locations and activities around child nutrition and growth, parenting, and reproductive health for adolescents were also provided to meet those needs.

In 2019, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection reported 3.6 million working children aged 10–17. Child labour is more common in rural areas, with 12.5 per cent of children working in comparison to 5.9 per cent

in urban areas. These issues are exacerbated during emergency situations. In the GFS, girls were able to further understand their rights and express their thoughts, for example, through a play presented to the community around child marriage and the risks of child labour. This enabled them to highlight what was important to them, specifically to receive an education instead of being forced to work.

The Central Sulawesi Response Activity also strengthened the community surrounding adolescent girls. YTSC trained 48 adults from local villages as volunteers to deliver the resiliency programme activities. GFS adult facilitators were trained on the key components of child protection in emergencies, which will be useful not only in future emergency responses, but also in carrying out other volunteer work in their communities. Furthermore, some of the adolescent girls were invited to engage in community discussions of village development plans to share their views on how to make temporary shelters safe for girls and children. The consultations aimed to address children's needs and include youth voices.

As Indonesia is highly prone to disasters, the resilience component of this activity was designed to equip adolescents with positive coping mechanisms for the future and empower them as participants in disaster response and recovery.

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From  
the People of Japan

