

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

## & FINAL REPORT 2016 – 2020

JUNE 2021

# GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



Photo credit: Plan International

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As a way of celebrating five years of GAA, we chose to use in this final report pictures from 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. As a consequence, not all picture reflect the Covid-19 measures taken across program countries during the last year of implementation (in line with local guidelines and regulations).

All links in this report are interactive

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCA	African Coalition for the Corporate Accountability
ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APC	Alliance Program Committee
APT	Alliance Program Team
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BoD	Board of Directors
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEFM	Child, early and forced Marriage
CM	Child Marriage
CRC	Committee on the Right of the Child
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibilities
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DCI	Defence for Children International
DCI-ECPAT	Defence for Children – ECPAT Netherlands
EAC	East African Community
EC	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EE	Economic Exclusion
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
G&YW	Girls and Young Women
GAA	Girls Advocacy Alliance
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMACL	Global March against Child Labour
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRM	Human Rights Mechanism
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRBC	International Responsible Business Conduct
L&A	Lobby & Advocacy
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NACG	National Action and Coordination Groups to End Violence against Children
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PM	Permanent Mission
PME&L	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
RVO	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (Netherlands Enterprise Agency)

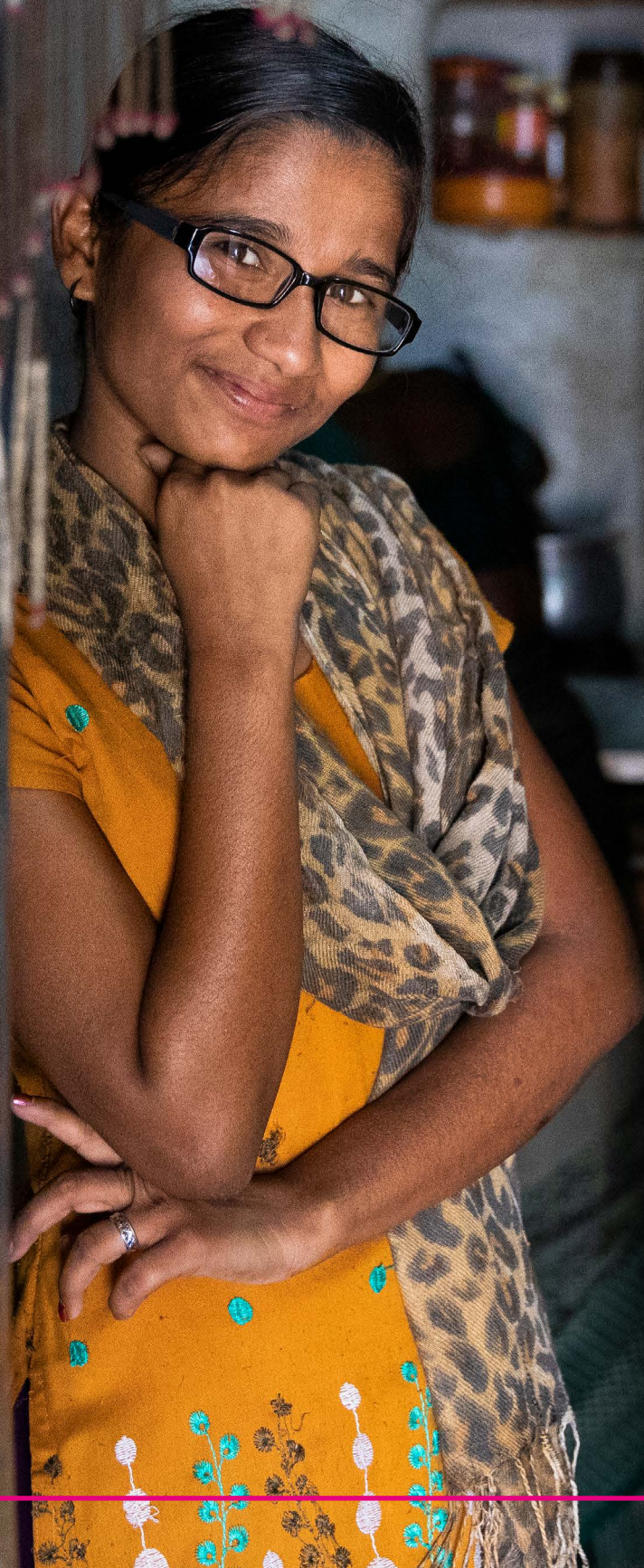


SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SACG	South Asia Coordinating Group on Violence against Children
SAIEVAC	South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
S4YE	Solutions for Youth Employment
TdH	Terre des Hommes
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSP	United Nations Special Procedures
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WRO	Women's Rights Organisation





GIRLS  
ADVOCACY  
ALLIANCE





## INTRODUCTION

The Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) is a 5-year joint program (2016-2020) of Plan International Netherlands, Terre des Hommes Netherlands and Defence for Children - ECPAT Netherlands. The GAA is led by Plan International Netherlands and is implemented in strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Dialogue and Dissent framework.

Goal of the program is that ultimately, governments, community leaders and private sector actors make sure that girls and young women (G&YW) in Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and the Philippines no longer face Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Economic Exclusion (EE). To this end, the GAA aims to influence key stakeholders in governments, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as community leaders to initiate lasting changes in their society that will benefit girls and young women.

Most notably, we enable civil society organizations in their lobby and advocacy work, so that they can influence their governments for strengthened accountability, more inclusive growth and development, and a reduction of the inequality faced by girls and young women in their countries. We also support CSOs to make private sector players more accountable for their contribution to the economic empowerment of girls and young women. Whenever possible we involve the Dutch Government as a strategic partner in these efforts.

At the same time, the program mobilizes key decision makers to address harmful social norms and values. These norms and values often keep citizens from demanding justice and from playing a positive role in the protection of girls and young women from harmful practices and from motivating them to explore their full potential.

Finally, the program also addresses the government and private sector in the Netherlands and uses regional and international accountability mechanisms in support of the efforts in the ten program countries.

This final report covers the period January 2016 – December 2020, with specific focus on progress in the programme's last year, January – December 2020. It assesses the progress of the Girls Advocacy Alliance program towards its objectives and considers the program's effectiveness. In addition, the report includes information on the indicators for Strategic Partnerships under the Dialogue & Dissent framework that were introduced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2017. It also explores changes in the external context and reflects on the relevance and validity of the program's Theory of Change.

### Reporting process

In November/December 2020, all Alliance Program Teams (APTs) gathered and analyzed signs of changes as a result of their program interventions for the period January - November 2020 (no implementation of program interventions took place in December 2020). The overall analysis and report presented in this document is based on these Outcome Lists and accompanying Annual Reports by the APTs.

### Final Evaluation

An external final evaluation of the programme was commissioned in 2020. Data collection took place in the period February – September 2020, and the final report was submitted to the MFA on 1 December 2020<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation was conducted by a team of external consultants led by MDF Training and Consultancy from the Netherlands and supported by an external reference group of three independent PMEL experts from Asia, Africa and the Netherlands. On 11 March 2021, the MFA formally approved the FTE report and discharged the consortium of its evaluation requirement. Where relevant, outcomes and findings of the final evaluation report have been included in this final report.

<sup>1</sup> The final evaluation report is available in IATI:  
[https://d-portal.org/ctrack.html?reporting\\_ref=NL-KVK-41198890#view=act&aid=NL-KVK-41198890-GAA](https://d-portal.org/ctrack.html?reporting_ref=NL-KVK-41198890#view=act&aid=NL-KVK-41198890-GAA)

### Financial progress

Financial information from the alliance organizations indicates that after a long start-up phase in 2016, the rate of implementation has increased markedly in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Implementation was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, but the implications on overall expenditures have been limited. In most countries, alternatives were found for planned activities in the form of online meetings or media campaigns, by organizing multiple smaller live meetings and/or by intensifying activities in times of more freedom of movement. Reduced costs for (inter)national travel were mostly offset by greater (time) investment in online exchange and distance monitoring; partly, these and other savings were also reallocated to additional research and (documentation of) learning (also see section 5.3. Learning), and to the purchase of face masks, disinfectant and other protective equipment for staff and others involved in face-to-face GAA activities. In some cases, GAA organisations supported youth activists and other CSOs with tablets and/or internet connection and data bundles to participate in online engagements. Finally, at the level of local CSO partners, lower effectiveness may not show in expenditure figures because as a principle, the consortium continued those payments to local CSO partners that included salaries for local staff.

The combined effects of the slower start-up phase, COVID-19 and (internal) organisational and contextual challenges in Bangladesh and Ethiopia<sup>2</sup> contributed to an overall under expenditure of EUR 200K by Plan International Netherlands (ca. 0,5% of the EUR 42.2 million total program budget); Defence for Children-ECPAT Netherlands and Terre des Hommes Netherlands exhausted their five-year budgets.

### COVID-19 and expected impact on GAA in 2020

A budget neutral amendment of the Annual Plan for 2020 was submitted to the Ministry on 11 May 2020, outlining the expected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the program's implementation and outcomes in 2020, as well as the planned response of GAA organizations. In its response to the crisis, the alliance focused on the immediate and longer-term expected effects for girls and young women, notably increased risks of sexual and domestic violence, economic exclusion and loss of access to education. Secondly, the alliance used its resources to support local (partner) CSOs to manage the impact of the crisis on their organizations. And finally, the alliance made efforts to monitor effects of the crisis on civic space and to address unjustified containments of this space where relevant. Throughout the response period, the alliance continued to work exclusively through its strategies of lobby and advocacy and capacity support.



Photo credit: Plan International

<sup>2</sup> Under expenditure in both countries was to a large extent caused by the cancellation of planned advocacy initiatives towards the private sector. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, it became increasingly difficult to engage with companies and implement the envisaged advocacy actions.

# 1. ADVOCATING FOR GIRLS' RIGHTS

## 1.1 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) envisions a world wherein all girls and young women enjoy equal rights and opportunities, are free from gender-based violence and are economically empowered.

To achieve this, the GAA applies lobby and advocacy interventions to increase public support; to improve policies and practices of private sector actors, to seek implementation of effective legislation and public policies; and to improve practices of government actors and community leaders in support of the elimination of gender-based violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women. At the same time, the GAA focuses on strengthening capacities of civil society organisations and networks (in particular Girls and Young Women organisations) to influence government and private sector actors.

The GAA program is implemented in ten countries in Africa and Asia: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sierra Leone and Uganda. It also works at regional levels in Africa and Asia, and at international policy levels and the level of Dutch public and corporate policies.

## 1.2. THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change of the GAA describes how the alliance expects change to happen. It identifies the long-term program goals, the conditions and stakeholders that must change, the causal relationships between these conditions, and the assumptions underlying these expectations.

In its endeavor to end gender-based violence and girls' and young women's economic exclusion, the program pays particular attention to sexual violence and abuse, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), child trafficking (CT), child marriage (CM), economic exclusion, access to post-primary education and vocational training, decent work and female entrepreneurship.

The GAA ToC is structured around four strategic goals:

1. Effective implementation of legislation and policies and improved practices of government actors
2. Improved policies and practices of corporate/private sector actors
3. Increased influence of CSOs and CSO networks on government and corporate/private sector actors
4. Increased public support for the elimination of GBV and economic exclusion of G&YW

The pathways of change each address one of these goals, yet they are intertwined and mutually supportive. Each of the strategic goals is associated with a key stakeholder in the issues of gender-based violence and economic exclusion: Governments and international/regional inter-governmental bodies; private sector actors; traditional, religious and community leaders; and civil society organisations and networks.

During the inception phase of the program in 2016, Alliance Program Teams developed a ToC for each of the 14 program components. These contextualised ToCs describe the specific goals, pathways of change, key actors and underlying assumptions for change in a particular context.

### Update of the Theory of Change

Based on reflections on pathways of change and assumptions by APTs, the GAA ToC was updated in October 2019. Reflections were included in the Annual Plan for 2020 and a visual representation of this update was presented in the Annual Report 2019. See more on this in Chapter 4.





...whether or not  
have a confirmed  
-19 infection.

Icon: Two hands shaking with a star above it. Text: A companion

Icon: A pill. Text: Pain relief

Mobility in labour where possible  
and birth position of choice

#COVID19 #CO

## 2. EXTERNAL CONTEXT

### 2.1. CHANGES IN THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

By December 2020, almost one year after the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 outbreak a worldwide public health emergency, only a handful of countries remained unaffected by the virus. With more than 128 million confirmed cases and almost 3 million global deaths<sup>3</sup>, and response measures including school and workplace closures, cancellation of public events and gatherings, stay-at-home restrictions and bans on international and domestic travel, the pandemic affected all sectors of society across the world.

COVID-19's impact does not fall equally. It has exacerbated existing inequalities, and the secondary impacts have hit girls and young women disproportionately. 'A year into the pandemic, we are no longer just worrying about progress on women's equality coming to a standstill. We're now seeing the possibility of such progress being reversed', says one international report<sup>4</sup>. The closure of schools particularly, has fundamental effects on girls and young women, and the impact on progress made on girls' education is yet to become fully visible. Apart from education, schools offer girls a network of peers and access to protection, information, support and services. Experience from the Ebola crisis in 2014 shows that girls are much less likely than boys to return to school after crises, partly as a consequence of loss of household income and partly as a consequence of increased numbers of teenage pregnancies. In Liberia alone, teenage pregnancies rose by 65% during the Ebola epidemic<sup>5</sup>.

GAA organisations across program countries note in particular the increase of gender-based violence and domestic violence, distorted education provision, decreased levels of income for economically active girls and young women, and suspension of access to SRHR services. Increased income insecurity moreover exposes girls and young women to greater risks of sexual violence and abuse. In Kenya, an estimated 50,000 girls became pregnant during lockdowns; similar figures are reported for Uganda. And in Ethiopia, a marked increase in child marriages was noted. According to 'Under Siege: the Impact of COVID-19 on Girls in Africa', a research commissioned by GAA and the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), COVID-19 kept more than 120 million school girls at home in Africa, with numerous reports from countries of child abuse and exploitation, including domestic violence and child marriage. In Asia, reports by governments, NGOs and UN agencies moreover highlight an increase in online sexual exploitation as children spend more time at home and on the internet<sup>6</sup>.

The pandemic takes place against a background of continued regressive trends on girls' and women's rights. Although the 2020 composition of the Human Rights Council is markedly more progressive than in previous years, gender, girls' rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights and girls' participation remain contentious in the Council and spark significant and often hostile debate.

### 2.2. THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

In its annual State of Civil Society Report, global CSO alliance CIVICUS critically denounces the use of restrictive legislation and coercive power by governments across the world under the banner of COVID-19 response, including violent enforcement of restrictions on movement and suppressing protests, and censorship and restrictions on access to information - as echoed by GAA APT accounts from countries like Uganda, Kenya and - despite the lifting of rules and

3 John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, see [coronavirus.jhu.edu/](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/)

4 Evidence Review of the Global Childcare Crisis and the Road for Post-COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience, by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) et al, see at [gatesfoundation.org](https://gatesfoundation.org).

5 Under Siege: the Impact of COVID-19 on Girls in Africa, by The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) and Plan International, see at [Under Siege](#).

6 For example: UN Women Policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women (see at [UN Women Asiapacific](#)), and COVID-19 and Violence against Women: The evidence behind the talk, by UNFPA, UN Women and Quilt.AI (see at [UNFPA Asiapacific](#)).

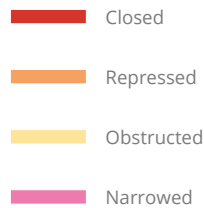


restrictions for CSOs in 2019 - also from Ethiopia. In many countries moreover, populist forces have been using the pandemic to sow division and polarisation for political advantage.

At the year's end, some 87% of the world's population lived in countries with severe civic space restrictions – a significant increase compared to 2019. Ratings worsened for 11 countries, including the Philippines (from obstructed to repressed). No improvements were noted in ratings for GAA program countries as compared to 2019.

**Table 1. Civic space in GAA program countries**

Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bangladesh	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed
India	Obstructed	Obstructed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed
Nepal	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed
Philippines	Obstructed	Obstructed	Repressed	Repressed	Closed
Ethiopia	Closed	Closed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed
Ghana	Narrowed	Narrowed	Narrowed	Narrowed	Narrowed
Kenya	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed
Liberia	Repressed	Repressed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed
Sierra Leone	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed	Obstructed
Uganda	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed



Source: CIVICUS Monitor – tracking civic space<sup>7</sup>

CSOs worldwide responded to the pandemic with provision of humanitarian support, healthcare, sanitary supplies and (access to) accurate information, and by ensuring the inclusion of most vulnerable and marginalized groups in support programs. Others also strived to push back against excessive state restrictions and abuses of power, and advocated for solutions for a more just post-pandemic society. At international levels especially, the transition to online meetings and events in some cases opened up new possibilities for civil society engagement and influencing. However, consultations by GAA in Africa confirm outcomes of a broader survey<sup>8</sup> of African CSOs that highlight the profound adverse impact of the pandemic on the sector. Many African CSOs experience loss of funding as a result of the pandemic, and struggle to keep their organisation afloat while also responding to the needs of constituencies. In Asia as well, GAA organisations note the struggle of CSOs in transforming activities in the face of inflexible funding arrangements, reluctant donors and lack of transparency and accountability from governments about COVID-19 response.

At the same time, 2020 was the year of Black Lives Matter. Sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in the US in May, worldwide protests against systemic racism and police violence reaffirmed the power of collective action. Across countries, climate change, systemic racism, unequal economies, the denial of democracy and sexual abuse and sexual harassment have in the past years mobilised increasing numbers of people to raise their voices - including demonstrations against sexual violence in 2020 in Liberia and Sierra Leone of which GAA organisations and partners formed part. The role of young people and their connections across borders and

<sup>7</sup> <https://monitor.civicus.org>

<sup>8</sup> A survey by @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa of over 1,000 African civil society organizations across 44 countries reveals that 56% of responding CSOs are already experiencing a loss of funding, while 66% expect to lose funding in the next 3 to 6 months. In addition, 50% of the CSOs noted that they have introduced measures to reduce costs because of the loss of funding.

along social and mobile technology in these movements is undeniable and sorely needed with the aftermath of the pandemic potentially contributing to even greater inequality – socially, geographically and between men and women.

### 2.3. EFFECTS ON PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

Lockdown measures, bans on public meetings and travel restrictions brought implementation of a large share of planned activities to a standstill for shorter or longer periods of time, depending on specific COVID-19 measures per country. Organisations had to revert to home-based working and distance monitoring and coordination. This was in many cases complicated by connectivity issues and took a heavy toll on (mental) wellbeing and functioning of staff (depending on their personal situation) and their sense of connectedness. Where face to face activities could be resumed, safety and health of staff and other actors involved was a priority.

Opportunities for networking and advocacy were moreover severely limited by shifting priorities and resources of governments, community leaders and the private sector alike. Some advocacy objectives had to be abandoned, such as the lobby for the Africa Youth Charter ratification in Liberia and finalisation of the Child Marriage Bill in Sierra Leone. With tourism and hospitality sectors especially thrown back to survival mode, dialogue on gender with private sector actors stalled almost completely in 2020.

At national and international levels, the development of COVID-19 response programs created new arenas for advocacy towards governments, with a clear role and mandate for GAA organisations to ensure attention for gender, especially gender-based violence - although lack of transparency and accountability on COVID-19 response from the side of governments was mentioned as a challenge in some countries. At international (regional and global) level, the shift to online meetings offered new opportunities for CSO and G&YW participation and influencing that GAA could capitalise on. At the same time, GAA organisations note that this has further deepened the digital divide that excludes G&YW without access to internet from participation.

At local (district, province) levels, online engagement with the government proved more difficult. Lack of (access to) IT and know-how at the side of government agencies were mentioned as a reason, but also shifting priorities, lack of direction and a stronger focus on collaboration for service delivery and direct (humanitarian) support. GAA's exclusive focus on advocacy made it more difficult to obtain a seat at the table, at least at these levels. As a consequence, in a number of countries, GAA organisations opted to focus on direct engagement with girls and young women and their families in program communities to raise awareness on COVID-19 prevention and GBV, including reporting and support mechanisms. Depending on current COVID-19 measures and internet connectivity, GAA organisations, CSO partners and community groups, volunteers and youth advocates met face to face or online, and cascaded outreach activities towards peers and constituencies at community level. Much use was also made of media to reach girls and young women and other target groups. In West Africa notably, radio talk shows attracted large audiences and sparked conversations, and at the same time provided a forum for GAA organisations in collaboration with police, (child) protection agencies, health officers and other government agents to reach target groups with messages on COVID-19, GBV and gender equality.

The Black Lives Matter movement has forced organisations to be more aware and reflective. There's an upcoming discussion in general on power relations and increased attention to systemic racism within the international development sector that has also been picked up by GAA organisations. With the overwhelming impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on program implementation in 2020, GAA organisations expect these discussions to reflect in their work in coming years.

With regards to the outcomes of the GAA program, there is a general concern that the pandemic has reversed some of the gains made by GAA organisations and other CSOs in GBV and sexual violence, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, girls' education and economic empowerment in the sense that across program countries, figures for these issues seem to have worsened during the pandemic. However, GAA teams also underline the importance of a structural paradigm



shift that has been taking place over the years, and to which GAA and its partners made important contributions. This change is apparent from, for example, increased reporting of cases of sexual violence and GBV, mass protests and government responses to recent spikes in sexual violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and overall greater acceptance of female leadership at all levels of society. Although gender equality will require much continued effort, it is hoped that these underlying changes in socio-cultural norms and values will transcend and help offset the adverse effects of the pandemic.



## 3. PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

### 3.1 OUTCOMES OF LOBBY & ADVOCACY

#### Collection of outcomes of the program in 2016-2020

To do justice to the complex and ever-changing realities of advocacy programs, the GAA has adopted in its PME&L system key building blocks of adaptive programming, notably the use of Theories of Change and Outcome Harvesting. All organisations involved in program implementation have kept an advocacy log of relevant changes observed at the level of key stakeholders and advocacy targets. Twice per year, APTs and local partner organisations jointly reflected on the collected signs of change, and determined whether and how their interventions contributed to these changes.

All signs of change of the 14 APTs have been kept in a master database as well. From 2018 onwards, a tailored application of the Power BI data analysis and visualisation tool has been used for consortium-level analysis. For the Final Evaluation in 2020, the GAA outcome database has been checked thoroughly by the evaluation team, with a number of corrections and updates as a result (e.g. deduplication of outcomes reported in multiple years and ‘unpacking’ of clusters of outcomes). As a consequence, annual figures presented here may differ slightly from figures in previous annual reports.

A total of 890 signs of change have been documented by the Alliance Programme Teams in 2020. These are considered as changes at the level of the key stakeholders of their joint GAA programs to which they assessed their interventions as a plausible contribution. This is a significant increase compared to the numbers of changes recorded for 2016 (79), 2017 (509) and 2018 (766), mainly because advocacy work tends to ‘pay off’ in later years. Compared to 2019 (1,512), less signs of changes were collected by the APTs in 2020. This drop is attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and national restrictions which hampered program implementation from January 2020 onwards and subsequently affected the achievement of results. Over the five years programme period, a total of 3,756 signs of changes have been reported.

The number of outcome signs differs per country and depends on, among other factors, the size of the program, the number of organisations involved, the nature of lobby and advocacy activities implemented and in 2020 also the extent to which countries and program implementation were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. Also, the level of aggregation of signs differs per APT. Countries with a larger number of organisations and/or themes, like Bangladesh, Uganda and the Philippines consistently reported larger numbers of signs.

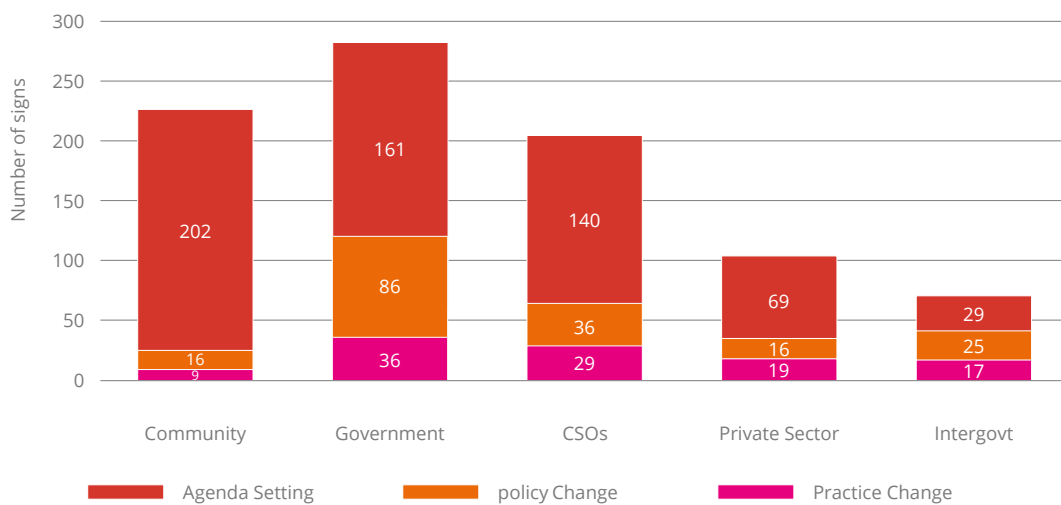
#### Analysis of signs of change

The majority of the 890 outcomes documented in 2020 relate to themes associated with gender based violence, notably Child Marriage, CSEC and Child Trafficking. Together, these three subthemes account for over sixty percent of the reported outcomes in 2020. This is consistent with the picture for the entire program period: 58% of all changes relate to GBV themes. A much smaller number of changes was observed by the APTs on Economic Exclusion – in 2020 (128 or 14%) as well as over the entire program period (553 or 15%). This is in line with the overall focus of the program and the expertise and experience of the GAA organisations.

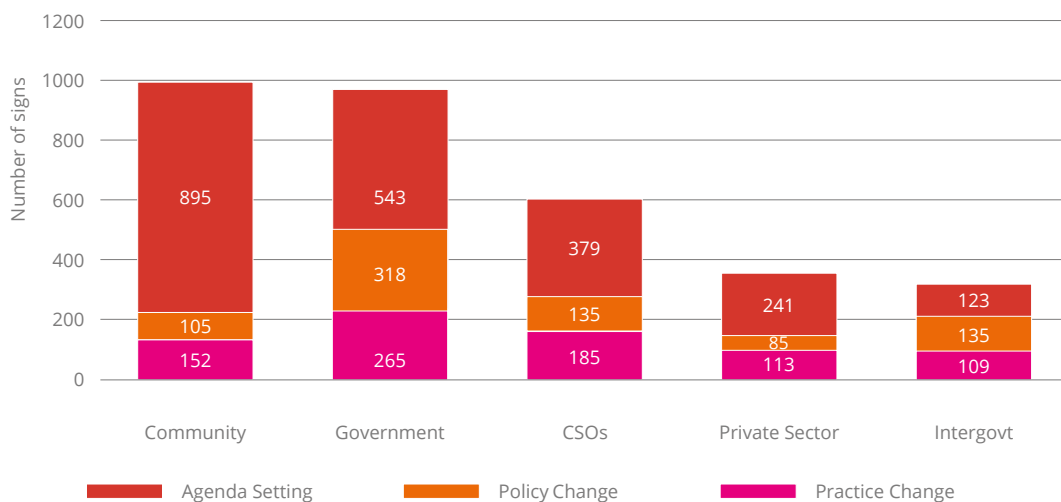
In the figures on the next page, an overview of signs per actor category and change level for 2020 and 2016 – 2020 is presented.



### Signs per actor and change level, 2020



### Signs per actor and change level, 2016 - 2020



Taking a closer look at the different key actors, the figures indicate that overall, most changes were seen at the level of community leaders and the general public (31%) and at the level of governments and intergovernmental agencies (together 40%). Fewer changes were observed at the level of CSOs (19%) and the private sector (11%). This ratio is rather consistent throughout the years, with a somewhat smaller share of changes at community level in 2020 – most probably an effect of limited mobility and bans on group meetings as a result of Covid-19.

The geographical distribution of the program's effects as well points to strong local presence of consortium organisations and their partners. The majority (42%) of changes was observed at local/community level, reflecting changes in agenda setting, awareness and practices of community leaders and the general public, as well as changes in agenda, awareness, policies and practices of local government actors and local CSOs. Another 25% of changes was recorded at district/province levels, and 17% at national levels. Thirteen percent of changes finally, was observed at cross-country level (global or regional) – a reflection of the efforts of the three program teams focusing on policy influencing at the regional level in Africa and Asia and at the international level.

With regards to the level of changes, the share of practice changes seems to have increased in the course of the program. In 2016, 70% of the observed signs of change indicated that GAA organisations succeeded in getting their advocacy asks on the agenda of key decision makers and stakeholders. In 2020, this percentage had dropped to 12%. On the other hand, the number of observed changes in key stakeholders' actual behaviour and practices increased in absolute as well as in relative terms: from a mere 11 signs (14%) in 2016 to more than 600 (68%) in 2020. Even though the dynamics of social change in GAA program countries proved more erratic than the initially assumed sequence of agenda setting – policy change – practice change, this trend does seem to confirm that advocacy takes time to result in actual improvements in the implementation of laws, policies and norms against gender-based violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women.

In the following sections, signs of changes are presented for each of the four key stakeholder groups of the GAA Theory of Change: government and intergovernmental agencies, community leaders and the general public, civil society (organisations) and the private sector. Focus is on changes observed in 2020; where relevant, reflection is included on trends and patterns for the overall program period.

### 3.1.1 Governments and intergovernmental agencies

A relatively large number of outcomes (40% overall) has been documented at all change levels (agenda setting, practice change and policy change) that can be linked to GAA's involvement with governments. These outcomes indicate that political actors and public officials are attaching more importance to Gender-based violence and Economic Exclusion of girls and young women, that they are developing or revising policies and guidelines linked to GAA themes, and that they are – increasingly in the course of the program - effectively starting implementation of new legislation or policies, or improving the implementation of existing ones.

The numbers of signs seem to indicate that GAA organizations have been especially effective in influencing governments at local and district levels. They have succeeded in engaging with governments and drawing attention to GBV and Economic Exclusion of girls and young women. They have also been able to contribute to better functioning services and structures (such as reporting mechanisms, referral systems and Child Protection Committees) by enhancing the knowledge of key stakeholders on relevant policies and legislation, National Plans of Action, legal systems and juridical procedures and by facilitating collaboration and coordination between actors and institutions from various sectors and levels.

In Uganda for example, the Community Development Offices of Mukuju and Apetai integrated the workplans of community advocates in the subcounty workplans for 2020 - 2021, including the allocation of budget for the implementation of current child marriage ordinances. GAA worked with the community advocates and helped them engage with champions at the sub-county office, and organised quarterly dialogue meetings with community development officials. In Ghana, dialogue meetings with local government and strategic engagement with (and support of) Champions of Change<sup>9</sup> contributed to the inauguration in May 2020 of a child marriage committee by the Gushegu Municipal Assembly, and to the start of the implementation of gender transformative bylaws. In Obuasi East, champions of change were instrumental in the Municipal Assembly's decision to allocate a budget for support to victims of gender-based violence. In India, as a result of GAA advocacy with the district Child Protection Unit, the Nagarkurnool District Collector in July 2020 took steps to strengthen effectiveness of implementation of the Child Marriage Act. He conducted workshops and webinars on compulsory registration of marriages and other preventative measures, and issued detailed directives to all panchayath secretaries.

At national level, in a number of countries GAA organisations worked closely with line ministries and a broad range of semi-governmental agencies. Through dialogue, contribution of thematic

<sup>9</sup> Champions of Change are key community, traditional and religious leaders who are committed to eliminate child marriage and GBV in their constituencies. The GAA programme has supported these leaders by building their network and facilitating their access to local and national media.



expertise, facilitation and other ‘insider strategies’ they were involved in the development of e.g. Child Protection Policies, Child Marriage Acts and various National Action Plans.

In the Philippines, active lobby and advocacy to national lawmakers, including submission of position papers, inputs to Congressional hearings, awareness raising campaigns, work with legislators and lawmakers on drafting bills and networking with other NGOs, paid off in the form of the formal approval by the House of Representatives in October 2020 of the increase of the age of determining statutory rape from 12 to 16 years old – an important landmark amid proliferation of sexual violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Sierra Leone, lobby and technical inputs helped bring the national gender empowerment policy to life: in March 2020 the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs adopted a plan of action for its implementation, followed in July by the establishment of the country’s first One-Stop Centre for legal, medical and psychosocial support for victims of sexual violence. Also in Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) replaced in March 2020 the ban on pregnant girls attending school by two new policies focusing on inclusive education. This was the result of a long trajectory of collaborative action by CSOs to secure an ECOWAS Court of Justice ruling against the challenged policy. And in Uganda, GAA’s work in support of the National Steering Committee on the elimination of child labour contributed to the formal adoption in March 2020 of the National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labour by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

In 2020, GAA organisations moreover engaged with governments and other (I)NGOs and CSOs to help shape COVID-19 response frameworks and policies. In Sierra Leone, GAA organisations formed part of a high-level task force that developed a National Framework for the response to GBV, Child Protection and Psychosocial issues during COVID-19. The GAA team provided technical inputs and training for CSOs and government staff on psycho-social support (PSS) and GBV during the pandemic. In Liberia, GAA played an important role in the government-led COVID-19 response at local and national level, leading to, among other things, the establishment of a Women, Carers and Children pillar within the national response framework, and the launch of a national hotline on SGBV. GAA also supported youth advocates in their advocacy towards the government and the general public to address the surge in rape cases, which contributed to the declaration by president Weah in September 2020 of rape as a national emergency in September 2020. And in Uganda, the Ministry of Gender reopened in July 2020 the toll free child abuse hotline, after GAA and other CSOs through the gender parliamentary committee had criticised the Ministry’s efforts against GBV during the pandemic.

### Influencing intergovernmental agencies and the Dutch government

GAA activities in the ten program countries are supported by interventions aimed at influencing intergovernmental institutions at global level and at the level of African and Asian regional bodies. In addition, GAA addresses Gender-Based Violence and young women’s economic empowerment at the level of Dutch public (foreign) policies. Through connecting international levels with national GAA programs, the GAA was able to strengthen its national level policy influencing.

By utilizing existing networks and sustaining positive relationships with key institutions, the GAA Asia Regional Program was able to collaborate successfully with regional intergovernmental bodies such as the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children’s (SAIEVAC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AIESEC).

GAA was instrumental in supporting the development, adoption and endorsement of the SAIEVAC Regional Strategy to address Child Marriage and Sexual Exploitation of Children across member states in South Asia by the SAIEVAC 8th governing board in 2019. In 2020, GAA contributed to the operationalization of this strategy into 5-year Regional Action Plans, which also included specific attention for online safety. Nepal and Sri Lanka have started implementing their National Action Plans, based on these Regional Actions Plans. Work with the ADB has focused on the institutionalization of youth participation in the ADB, and on mobilising resources for the economic empowerment of young women in South and Southeast Asia. In the course of the program, a long term strategy and framework for youth engagement was developed and put into action

in collaboration with GAA, including a technical assistance instrument for youth participation and innovative employment solutions that has to date enabled several youth-led activities. A Youth Economic Empowerment approach was developed and launched in 2020 with focus on the upskilling of marginalized young women for quality (digital) jobs.

In Africa at the regional level, GAA organizations effectively lobbied regional governance bodies, notably the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC). They were able to put context-specific GAA themes and issues on the agendas of these governance bodies, notably Child Marriage (CM), Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Child Trafficking (CT), and strengthened sub-regional and regional monitoring and accountability mechanism on GVB and EEs.

In June 2020 the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) of the AU adopted the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI) as monitoring and evaluation tool for the assessment of the implementation of the Maputo Protocol<sup>10</sup>. The MPSI builds on the design of the scorecard by GAA and facilitation of the development of CSO report cards on Maputo Protocol implementation in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia and Uganda, intended to help CSOs in these countries to hold their governments accountable for the implementation of the protocol. In May 2021, GAA advocacy for a continent-wide Scorecard and Index to monitor the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by AU Member States culminated in the adoption of the MPSI by the Gender Ministers from 42 Member States – an important boost for gender equality and women/girls empowerment in Africa.

A rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on girls and young women in Africa by GAA highlighted the impact of the pandemic on girls, including abuse, exploitation, exclusion from basic services and SRHR, hunger and poverty. The launch of the GAA report 'Under Siege - Impact of COVID-19 on Girls in Africa' in August 2020 led the AUC Commissioner for Social Affairs leading the African COVID-19 response to publicly commend and emphasise that the report be used in the continent's response to COVID-19.

The GAA International team supported GAA countries teams to report to international accountability mechanisms, and to follow up on conclusions and recommendations of these mechanisms. This has led in 2020 for instance to CSO and youth contributions to the VNR processes of Nepal and Kenya, a joint alternative CSO UPR report on girls and young women in Liberia, CSO CRC reports and inputs from the Philippines, India and Sierra Leone, and the uptake of GAA issues by UN Permanent Missions in their recommendations on the Kenya and Liberia UPR review.

The International team also continued its support to youth advocates and its efforts to institutionalize meaningful youth participation in international policy fora, resulting in inputs and contributions by youth advocates from various countries to CRC, VNR UPR reviews. Due to Covid-19, most of these events were online in 2020, which brought issues of online safety to the foreground but at the same time opened new possibilities. A special highlight in October 2020 was the meeting between UN Secretary General António Guterres and GAA youth advocate Stecia from Uganda on her work to end gender-based violence and harmful social norms – a meeting that inspired Guterres to call for the amplification of the voices of young women, the new leaders of our time.



In the Netherlands, GAA lobbied for the inclusion of gender equality issues into the responsible business conduct agreements (the so called IMVO covenants). During the past few years, GAA organizations engaged intensively with business associations and companies signatories to the agreements, government agencies like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the SER and other

<sup>10</sup> The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa went into effect in 2005 and guarantees comprehensive rights to women including the right to take part in the political process, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to FGM.



NGO stakeholders, with a focus on the sectors of garment and textile, metallurgy, food and tourism (a sector outside the IMVO covenants). GAA's lobby efforts aimed to ensure that risks of child rights violations and gender discrimination were duly recognized by all stakeholders and consequently prioritized in the agreement and subsequent action plans of signatories.

The evaluation of the IMVO agreements conducted by KIT last year demonstrated that only two IMVO covenants did select gender equality as a cross-cutting theme while three covenants identified child rights issues (mainly child labour) as a sector specific theme. But despite these rather disappointing results at overall level, GAA organizations managed to raise awareness among stakeholders in the garment & textile, metallurgy and food agreements and of the tourism sector about the importance of integrating a gender perspective in their due diligence practice and drafting of action plans. The SER showed increased interest to organize a training session on gender and human rights due diligence. As GAA organizations had previously noted the lack of knowledge and the need for practical guidance, they decided to invest in the development of a gender responsive human rights due diligence tool. Based on conversations with companies, the Ministry, SER and allies such as Women Win and WO=MEN during 2020, GAA managed to publish a comprehensive tool that enables companies to apply a consistent gender lens through all the six steps of human rights due diligence. The tool has been widely disseminated across a wide range of relevant stakeholders: in addition to the ones mentioned above, it was presented to the UN Global Compact, BSR, brands and companies in the garment and textile sector, WO=MEN and within the international network of Plan International offices. The garment sector included the tool in their newsletter. With this, quite a number of companies were reached and some companies also showed an interest to start using the tool as well.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented both opportunities as well as challenges to GAA's lobbying efforts. The global crisis clearly showed the unsustainable and unequal character of international supply chains, where millions of young women can be dismissed overnight when international brands suddenly decide to revoke their orders. The dramatic situation at the start of the global pandemic created increased awareness of consumers on the fundamental flaws in global supply chains and the devastating effects on the lives of (young) women and children. GAA organizations together with Fair Wear decided to deepen this process of consumer awareness by launching a storytelling project about gender equality in the garment sector. By collecting stories from people engaged in the various stages of garment production, the project aims to highlight the impact that brands' purchasing practices have on the lives of workers, young women in particular (see: [Following the threads: stories of women workers – Fair Wear](#)).

The COVID-19 outbreak also had a negative impact on GAA's lobbying actions. Due to the acute economic crisis, companies in the hardest hit sectors (like garment and tourism) were suddenly thrown into survival mode. Many of them had to deal with urgent financial challenges, which obviously led to a diminished interest in and attention to the issues being put forward by the GAA organizations. In some instances, companies decided to temporarily put on hold their contribution to Responsible Business Conduct initiatives such as for the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. Despite these difficulties, GAA organizations still managed to persuade companies to step up their commitment to girls' and children's rights. In tourism for instance, two new companies (Booking and Maroc Travel) became members of the Code.

### 3.1.2. Community leaders and the general public

In 2020 as in previous years, GAA in 2019 continued to be an active influencer at community level, as reflected in the relatively large share of outcomes that can be linked to this level (31%). Many positive signs of change have occurred at the level of community leaders and community members, indicating increased commitment and changed practices in addressing gender based violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women.

In Ethiopia for example, GAA awareness raising and facilitation helped activate anti-HTP committees and Iddirs, who prevented in 2020 almost 350 child marriages by engaging with envisaged child brides and their parents. In Ghana, community child protection teams in Saboba, Gushegu and Sagnarigu provided information for girls and young women about Covid-19 prevention and created safe spaces for girls and young women to access sexual and

reproductive health services. Youth advocates in Kadoli and Bekwai advocated parents and community leaders on safeguarding child protection during lockdown. And in India, 10 Hindu religious leaders from Krishna district made important statements against child marriages and emphasized the need for girls to return to school as soon as possible after reopening of schools.

In Kenya, the movie 'Nambwa FM' (<https://youtu.be/OicqCcxPPtE>) and the accompanying youth-led campaign (radio shows, social media) ignited dialogue on girls' and women's empowerment and acted as a catalyst for change in communities and among the broader public. Based on real life experiences from girl advocates from Kwale County, 'Nambwa FM' was produced through a co-creation process involving girls and young women, community members and leaders, and representatives from government, civil society and the private sector. In September 2020, 'Nambwa FM' premiered nationwide on national TV.

### 3.1.3. Civil Society (Organisations) and Youth Advocates

In its efforts to support CSOs to effectively take up their watchdog role, GAA continued in 2020 to focus on like-minded CSOs (as opposed to the more general approach in the 2016 and 2017), and on strengthening their linkages and networks. As one outcome, the Child Protection Network in Lofa, Liberia, successfully demanded the County Steering Committee Coordination Meeting for immediate investigation of rape cases. In Kenya, the Kibera CSO network petitioned the Kibera Member of Parliament to support the provision of sanitary pads. In India, CSOs in Cumbum, Rachrla and Markapur mandals conducted awareness raising on Human Trafficking and collected signatures to petition the Department of WD&CW to demand the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons Bill. In Bangladesh, CSO BSAF joined the core committee for reviewing the National Plan of Action (NPA) of National Child Labour Elimination Policy and as such succeeded to include its recommendations in the new NPA. And in Sierra Leone, CSOs took collaborative action in 2019 to submit a case against the ban on pregnant girls from attending school to the ECOWAS Court of Justice - which led to a successful ruling by the ECOWAS Court and the replacement of the challenged policy by the Sierra Leonean government in 2020 as outlined in section 3.1.1. above.

In many cases, CSO action in 2020 focused on Covid-19 response. In the Philippines for example, in response to greater risks of domestic violence during lockdown, three CSOs from Metro Cebu developed helplines for children. In India, CSO networks undertook community sensitization and relief work during the pandemic, and in Kenya as well, Kisumu Country CSOs collaborated to design emergency response programs. The Child Rights Coalition in Sierra Leone lobbied the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Children's affairs to harmonize their strategic response Framework for the psychosocial pillar of the COVID-19, particularly addressing children and gender issues.

#### Youth advocates

In most program countries, GAA organizations continued in 2020 to train and support youth advocates, many of whom have initiated collective action on GAA topics, with specific focus on COVID-19.

In Nepal for example, GAA supported in 2020 initiatives of girls' and young women's clubs and networks to address menstrual hygiene and child marriage – two issues of particular urgency for girls and young women during lockdown. Girls and young women developed instruction videos on home-made sanitary napkins and raised funds for sanitary napkins at quarantine centres, but also directly addressed the Mayor of Nepalgunj Sub- Metropolitan and the District police officer to take action against increasing incidence of child marriages. Some 140 girls and young women have been involved in these and other advocacy activities at community and municipal level, and towards religious leaders, CSOs, district police and other key stakeholders, participating in awareness raising, door-to-door campaigns and national and international platforms and consultations (such as the Beijing Platform for Action and VNR and UPR consultations).

In Ghana, girls' clubs were engaged in mobilising peers for advocacy campaigns and actions, such as reporting of GBV cases and planned early and/or forced marriages through Community Child Protection Teams, social welfare departments and the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOWSU). Girls were also instrumental in community

sensitisation on Covid-19 prevention protocols and safe-keeping of youth. Girls and young women and their clubs and networks were supported with training, national and regional Girls Camps, weekly capacity development activities in schools by teacher mentors, debates and quizzes at schools and district level, as well as support in preparation of position papers, petitions and presentations for specific advocacy actions and events. An estimated 4,496 girls and 2,521 young women in Ghana were reached in 2020 by these activities.

In Liberia, youth advocates organised awareness raising activities, including radio interviews and press releases on COVID-19 and the shadow pandemic to raise an alarm on rape, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, violence against children and trafficking. In October, Liberian GAA youth advocates Miatta and Mulbah spoke with CEDAW committee member Corrine Dettmeijer on how the CEDAW committee could help them address violence against girls and child trafficking in Liberia.

The alliance also supported youth advocates to access and participate at international and regional policy events and fora, insofar as these took place during the pandemic. With the support of GAA, youth advocates in 2020 for instance joined an online campaign about the impact of COVID-19 on young people in Asia by the ADB; an online youth consultation in India; the Africa Youth Front on Corona Virus, charged with developing continental recommendations; the Nepal UPR pre-session; the 6th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development; the Generation Equality Action Coalitions youth consultations on Beijing +25 for the CSW and UN Gender Equality Fora; the African Regional Sustainability Forum; and an online South-North debate moderated by GAA youth facilitator Mellicentia, which gathered young panelists from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Scotland and the Dutch Youth Ambassadors to the UN. Important in 2020 also was the participation of 6 GAA supported youth advocates from Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Uganda and Liberia in the virtual High Level Political Forum. They joined various sessions on the (implementation) of the SDGs, spoke on various panels and met with UN Special Representative on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid; the UN Youth Envoy Jayathma Wickramanayake and the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed.

The fact that most meetings took place online on the one hand opened up opportunities for participation but also challenged GAA teams to find solutions for new issues related to online safeguarding and connectivity. Efforts were also undertaken to embed youth initiatives into more sustainable structures. Positive developments were noted, for example at the East African Community (EAC), which reserves slots for youth in the newly established GBV working group. The UN Working Group on discrimination against women as well, committed to engage with and consult girls on a regular basis, and has asked GAA to share expertise on meaningful youth participation. After his meeting with GAA youth advocate Stecia, UN SC Guterres in October publicly confirmed his commitment to strengthen the voices of girl advocates. Challenges remain however. The GAA Asia team for example notes that tokenism is still an issue, and in many cases, there is no clear follow-up on recommendations or inputs by youth.

### 3.1.4 The Private Sector

Like in previous years and in line with the program's focus, a relatively modest number of reported changes in 2020 is related to the private sector. Although absolute numbers vary (from 8 in 2016 to 181 in 2019 and 104 in 2020), the share of changes at the level of private sector actors has remained fairly equal between 9% (2018) and 12% (2019 and 2020). Most of these changes were seen in small and medium sized enterprises. In many program countries, GAA organizations and partners successfully engaged with local companies to discuss GBV and women's economic empowerment, and more specifically the position of (young) women in their businesses and the role of the private sector in addressing risks and abuses. GAA organizations moreover linked local enterprises with vulnerable youth and supported them to create jobs for these target groups.

Continuous engagement, follow up on earlier actions with targeted private sector actors and linking and networking through associations and apex organisations showed good results. In Uganda, GAA organizations followed up on contacts with bars, hotels and entertainment venues, which helped to ensure the actual implementation of codes of conduct that were jointly developed in previous years. Continued engagement with the district Labour Officer moreover



proved instrumental in ensuring compliance with labour laws and the implementation, dissemination and effectuation of gender-sensitive HR policies by formal and informal companies in Tororo. Likewise, in the Philippines, building on advocacy efforts in previous years, 45 hotels and resorts in 2020 took steps to prevent and act upon signs of CSEC, Trafficking in Person (TIP) and child labour. In Kenya, advocacy with private sector associations yielded positive results: the Medium and Small Enterprise Association (MSEA) incorporated GBV issues in its workplace and HR policies and has set out to harmonize various private sector Codes of Conduct. And the code of conduct against online sexual exploitation of children that was developed and introduced by the Internet Service Providers Association in Bangladesh (ISPAB) in collaboration with GAA in 2019, was in 2020 rolled out to 500 ISPAB members. In Ethiopia, GAA organised a dialogue session with the Chamber of Commerce, which inspired 16 companies to step up their efforts to create decent work for young women.

These and other examples do underline however that engaging and actually influencing private sector actors to make real changes for the benefit of girls and young women is a long-time affair and requires specific networks and expertise. At the regional level in Asia, the development of business cases proved an effective strategy to engage with international corporates, private sector networks and other relevant players such as the Ready Made Garment industry (RMG) and Hotel and Tourism sectors. GAA organisations in Bangladesh built on these business cases to engage with RMG factories and branch organisations, which resulted in a number of positive actions by factories, including the formation of Sexual Harassment Committees in several factories in 2019. In Nepal, the business cases formed the backbone of evidence-based advocacy towards the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) and the Trekking Agency Association Nepal (TAAN) and the joint development of policies on gender equality, child protection, ethical hiring and decent work for these sectors.

The lobbying efforts towards the private sector, especially in tourism (Nepal) and garment (Bangladesh) have been amplified by GAA in the Netherlands as outlined in paragraph 3.1.1. above.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged progress towards further practice changes at the level of the private sector in a number of cases in 2020. In Nepal, the policies that had been drafted in previous years for HAN and TAAN were not yet fully implemented. No new outcomes for the RMG sector were reported in Bangladesh in 2020.

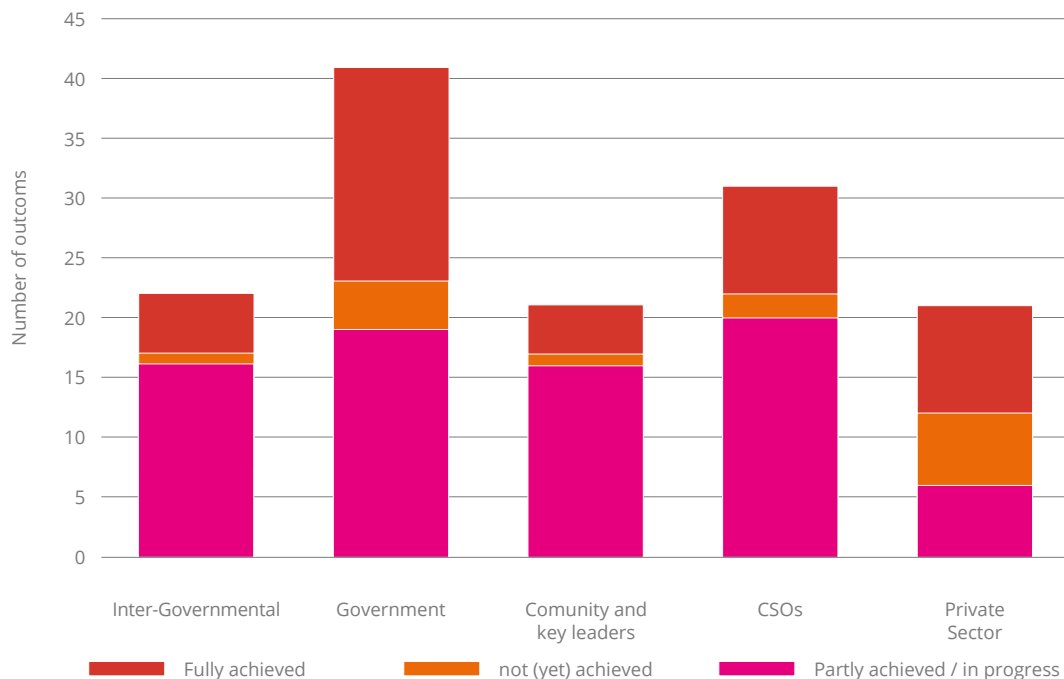
### 3.1.5. Progress towards envisaged outcomes of L&A in 2020

The Alliance Program Teams report that over half of their expected outcomes for 2020 (57%; 77 out of 136 expected outcomes) have been achieved. Another 33% of the expected outcomes have been partially achieved. Ten percent of the expected outcomes have not yet been (fully) achieved as planned, with in the majority of cases at least one sign of change that could be linked to the expected outcome, indicating that some positive changes were happening. Below figure shows the realization of expected intermediary outcomes for 2020 per actor category.

#### Pathways

The program teams have been especially successful in realizing their expected outcomes for 2020 at the level of communities and key leaders (76%), followed by progress at (inter) government level and with CSOs (73% and 56% respectively). Efforts aimed at influencing national governments were slightly less effective, with some 46% of expected outcomes achieved. Expected outcomes proved most difficult to realize for the private sector (29%). This supports the conclusions from the section above that GAA organizations have strong ties and track records at local levels, and that influencing the private sector has remained challenging in many countries, although notable results are being achieved as well, including in Nepal, Uganda, Bangladesh and the Philippines. The relatively lower percentage of achieved expected outcomes at the level of (national) governments may reflect high ambitions in a complex field: in absolute numbers, by far most expected outcomes relate to influencing national governments. Lower levels of outcome achievement at the level of (national) governments may also reflect a shift in approach by GAA organisations. Many of them have moved from targeting (mainly) local governments towards (also) influencing national governments – an area of work with greater challenges and uncertainties.

### Realisation of intermediary expected outcomes 2020



### Countries and contexts

Six program teams were able to fully achieve over 75% of their expected outcomes for 2020: Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Uganda and the regional program components in Asia and Africa. Most other program teams managed to partially achieve the outcomes they expected to realize by the end of the program. Only in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nepal did teams indicate little or no progress towards one or more outcomes. In most cases, this was related to changes at the level of national governments or the private sector. Although ambitions for changes at the level of the private sector had already in earlier years been flagged as high, the COVID-19 pandemic may have had a negative effect on the realisation of envisaged outcomes at these two levels. Several APTs had to abandon advocacy trajectories as priorities and resources of governments and private sector actors shifted to COVID-19 response.

Differences in progress towards expected outcomes per country or program components do not seem to relate strongly to developments in the external environment or to the spaces for civil society lobby and advocacy. Countries with closed or oppressed civic spaces (Ethiopia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Uganda and Liberia) do not report significantly lower progress towards the expected outcomes of their advocacy work than countries with more open civic spaces. This seems in line with the observation that GAA partners are capable of adapting their advocacy strategies and messages, and probably also their advocacy ambitions, to the (im)possibilities of their context. Moreover, the GAA organizations usually work on themes and topics that align with government priorities and that are not especially politically sensitive.

### 3.2. OUTPUTS OF L&A

The rate of output delivery by GAA organizations and their partners increased steadily from 2016 to 2019 and dropped to 2017 levels in 2020 - the latter reflecting the effects of the shorter implementation period that was envisaged for the last year and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The reports by the Alliance Program Teams confirm that GAA organizations and their partners are comfortable with 'insider' advocacy tactics, directly engaging with advocacy targets and

building on collaborative relationships. Notably in 2018, 2019 and 2020, they invested in the linking of actors in platforms and collaborative networks, and the strengthening and supporting of these networks, varying from policy networks with line ministries and technical experts, advocacy networks of local CSOs and regional networks of traditional leaders, to youth groups, private sector networks and multi-disciplinary networks of community-based committees, local government agencies and service providers. GAA partners often play a key role in bringing stakeholders together and facilitating collaboration and exchange of knowledge and information. In 2020, this approach positioned the GAA organisations very well to contribute to local, district/province and national level COVID-19 responses and advocate for the inclusion of girls' and young women's perspectives in response measures and action plans.

This approach is complemented by a variety of tactics that indicate that GAA partners also opt for more indirect 'outsider' approaches to influence advocacy targets, including coalition and network building, community mobilization, awareness raising campaigns, media campaigns and direct influencing of individual key decision-makers at various levels.

### COVID-19

In line with the Amendment to its Annual Plan for 2020 that was shared with the MFA in May 2020, the GAA response to the pandemic followed three main lines: supporting community actors in addressing GBV and economic risks for G&YW as a result of COVID-19; supporting CSO partners to advocate for gender responsive COVID-19 response; and supporting youth and girls advocates' voices in COVID-19 response mechanisms.

As an indicator of GAA's response to the pandemic, the alliance and its partner organisations were involved in national and/or local COVID-19 management processes in Liberia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, the Philippines, Sierra Leone and Uganda. Their contribution varied from technical inputs and direct involvement in the drafting of policies and logistical support for training of service providers to lobby and advocacy towards government agencies for gender responsive measures, data collection for evidence based policy development (through consultations, surveys, publications and primary research and studies) and the facilitation of the inclusion of youth and girls' voices in these processes. At regional level in Africa and Asia, GAA teams worked to support the development of gender responsive COVID-19 management processes at national levels, for example with a mapping of interventions in Asia, consultation of youth advocates by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the development and dissemination of the 'Under Siege - Impact of COVID-19 on Girls in Africa' report, and by facilitating inputs and participation of CSOs and youth and girls' advocates in various African Union (AU) fora and events. In Kenya, youth networks collected data to feed into local government's relief programs.

In Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, the Philippines and Uganda, GAA and its partners moreover supported CSOs, community actors and volunteers and youth advocates to conduct awareness raising and COVID-19 support. In Bangladesh and India, among other countries, this also included religious leaders, who not only included messages on COVID-19 and GBV in their services but also developed action plans to address increased Child Marriage and sexual violence as a consequence of lockdown and quarantine measures. Youth advocates, community child protection teams and other community volunteers who engaged in outreach activities were – beyond the usual capacity development - supported with training on COVID-19, facilities for online and distance working and where relevant protective materials. In Bangladesh and Nepal, girls' clubs took action to provide access to menstrual products during lockdown and quarantine, and in Ghana and Ethiopia, youth advocates undertook online and face to face action to raise awareness on increased risks of Child Marriage and GBV.

GAA's COVID-19 response was furthermore provided through media campaigns focusing on awareness raising on the pandemic's impact on girls and young women. Radio talk shows with police officers, health staff and other service providers and even MPs attracted large numbers of listeners in Bangladesh, the Philippines and West African program countries, and in the Philippines, a GAA supported documentary made national television. Finally, much of GAA's advocacy work was simply stepped up as the pandemic only gave our existing advocacy agenda extra urgency. An example is GAA's work on safe internet use in Bangladesh, which continued to make significant progress right up until the closure of the program.



### 3.3. OUTCOMES OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity Development in the context of the GAA Theory of Change refers to the strengthening of organizational capacities for lobby and advocacy of direct CSO partners of the alliance, who are formally contracted for the implementation of the program. An annual participatory assessment of the capabilities is conducted, using a Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT) based on the 5 Core Capabilities framework developed by the European Centre for Development Policy Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)<sup>11</sup>. In line with this framework, the GAA distinguishes five core capabilities: (1) Capacity to Commit and Act; (2) Capacity to Deliver on development objectives; (3) Capacity to Adapt and Renew; (4) Capacity to Relate to External Stakeholders and (5) Capacity to Achieve Coherence. The GAA adapted the CAT by using specific indicators (pointers) for the lobby & advocacy competencies related to each core capability.

The pool of CSO partner organisations of the GAA has undergone some changes through the years: 47 CSOs participated in the initial baseline capacity assessment in 2016; the number of CSOs in the 2020 capacity assessment was 45<sup>12</sup>. Out of these, 20 had been involved from the very beginning of the programme, hence their scores could be tracked for five consecutive years. Another 23 organisations had been involved in the program for three or more years.

The changes in the pool of GAA CSO partner organisations primarily is an indication of the adaptive nature of the program, reflecting e.g. shifts from traditional partners to organisations with expertise, experience and networks more specifically tailored to GAA approaches (lobby and advocacy, networking, private sector engagement). In some countries, direct contracts were moreover concluded with partner organisations previously engaged through network organisations.

As a consequence, aggregated capacity scores per year are difficult to compare. Developments in capacity assessments per individual organisation give more meaningful information. This corresponds with GAA's approach to capacity development, which places primary ownership of capacity development processes with the CSO partners and the contracting alliance organisations, and analyses CAT scores mainly at the level of individual CSO partners and networks. Nonetheless, some trends can be identified and general conclusions drawn at the aggregated level, when looking at the results of five years of capacity support through the GAA.

#### Summary of Capacity Development outcomes

The annual reports and the annual capacity assessments as well as the Mid-term review of the program confirm that the capacity development support provided through the GAA program to CSO partner organisations was essential for the enhancement of their advocacy outcomes. The Final Evaluation moreover concluded that it has allowed those GAA partner organisations, CSO partners and associated CSOs that previously applied a service delivery approach to adopt a new, policy-influencing one.

For example, as an outcome of its strategy review, Pan-African partner FAWE established an exclusive advocacy unit. In Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and the Philippines as well, partners integrated advocacy in their overall strategies, which was new to some of them. In many cases, partners moreover took on a more strategic and transformative approach to gender equality and girls' rights in their programming work as well as in their own organisation.

There is ample evidence of partners successfully putting into practice strengthened advocacy skills, notably the abilities to develop advocacy messages, to target and engage key stakeholders and to work with (social) media and youth advocates. In the Philippines, ECLIPSE engaged counselors as champions of change, resulting in the adoption of two ordinances for emergency child protection response. In Kenya, WELL pushed for the development and implementation of a standard operating procedure on GBV cases by the National Police, which is now being

<sup>11</sup> See: [ecdpm.org/publications/5cs-framework-plan-monitor-evaluate-capacity-development-processes/](https://ecdpm.org/publications/5cs-framework-plan-monitor-evaluate-capacity-development-processes/)

<sup>12</sup> Out of the 49 contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and local offices of Plan International and Terre des Hommes) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.

used in several districts. In Bangladesh, AVAS engaged high-level government representatives to speak out against child marriage during a series of dialogues on national television. Partners in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Kenya and other countries mobilised and supported youth advocates to meaningfully participate in local, national and international fora for advocacy and influencing.

Perhaps even more than training and workshops, capacity effects of GAA stem from practice, joint action, collaboration and reflection. Engagement with parliament and legislators for example, has been experienced as an eye-opener on how CSOs can navigate. Partners in Nepal, Ghana, Kenya and other countries are to date building on linkages and networks built through GAA collaboration, especially around international accountability mechanisms such as the AU, CRC, CEDAW and HLPF, and with private sector and other actors beyond the more conventional CSO networks.

Training and practice in PME&L for lobby and advocacy, including the outcome harvesting method, helped partners to track changes, monitor progress of advocacy work, identify success stories and build stronger track records as a backbone to organisational sustainability. The knowledge and experience from 5 years of adaptive programming moreover helped partners to respond to the Covid-19 crisis within the framework of the program.

As the table below shows, a steady increase is observed at program level over time for all 5 Core Capabilities. As in 2016, CSO partners consider their capacity to related to external stakeholders (C4) as their organisations' strongest ability, suggesting that GAA partners are well able to identify, develop and maintain relationships with constituencies, relevant advocacy targets and other CSOs and CSO networks – not surprising considering the nature and type of partners that have initially joined the alliance, many of them being community based, with close ties with their constituencies and a strong record on service delivery.

Average 5C scores of all partner CSOs	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
C1. Capacity to commit and act	2,8	2,9	3,2	3,2	3,6
C2. Capacity to deliver on development objectives	2,7	2,8	3,0	3,2	3,4
C3. Capacity to adapt and self-renew	2,8	2,8	3,0	3,2	3,5
C4. Capacity to attract/relate external stakeholders	3,2	3,3	3,4	3,5	3,7
C5. Capacity to balance diversity and consistency	2,9	3,0	3,1	3,3	3,6

The capacity to deliver on development objectives (C2) scored lowest in the initial assessment as well as in 2020. Organisations expressed significantly more confidence in their abilities to deliver on objectives however, especially when it comes to framing and communicating advocacy messages – a range of skills that was frequently addressed in the course of the program, through direct capacity development actions as well as during joint analysis and program implementation.

Noticeable also, the gap between the lowest and highest scoring capabilities has decreased, an indication of the fact that more growth has been experienced in areas that were considered as weak than in areas that were assessed as already strong – in line with the ambition of the program to support CSO partners towards a balanced set of capabilities for lobby and advocacy.

When comparing the scores per country, it is observed that all countries in 2020 had overall average scores between 3,0 (Bangladesh) and 3,9 (Nepal). While this difference can be seen as significant, the overall conclusion is that countries have predominantly remained aligned in their progress and results. Regional comparisons also do not suggest significant differences, with East Africa, West Africa and Asia scoring on average 3,5; 3,6 and 3,6 respectively.

Looking at CAT scores for 2020 per organization as compared to their initial measurements (whenever they joined the alliance), 40 out of 45 partner CSOs (89%) show an increase in total score, reflecting increases in all or several organizational capabilities and related competencies for lobby and advocacy. Two organisations showed a very minor decrease in overall CAT score, whereas three have remained at the same average score.

The majority of CSO partners also progressed towards the targets set for 2020. Consequently, the targets set per country have predominantly been achieved. In six countries (Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, India and the Philippines) targets for all Core Capabilities have been achieved or exceeded. In two countries (Kenya and Uganda), the targets for all but one of the core capabilities were achieved, while in two countries (Nepal and Bangladesh) all but two were achieved. However, the results in these countries are only slightly below targets, while in Nepal particularly, targets were very ambitious (a maximum score of 4 for all criteria) and the results for Bangladesh, Uganda and Kenya may have been influenced by the joining of new CSO partners in the last two years of the program.

Finally, it must be noted that, whereas the GAA has been mostly measuring the impact of capacity building on its partner CSOs as described in this report, a considerable part of program activities has been reaching a broader spectrum of CSOs. As confirmed by the FTE, therefore, effects on organisational capacities of civil society (organisations) of the program can also be observed beyond the contracted partner organisations. During the program period, per year some 2.000 to 2.500 non-contracted CSOs including youth organizations, grassroots organizations, faith-based organizations and NGOs participated in activities initiated and funded through the GAA, including capacity building.

### 3.4 INCLUSIVENESS

Girls' and young women's experiences, views and opinions inform strategies and programmatic choices of the GAA in various ways. During the GAA baseline study in 2016, the Mid-Term Review in 2018 and the Final Evaluation in 2020, focus group discussions, individual interviews and consultations with girls, boys, youth and young women were convened. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, program teams in various countries conducted studies, surveys or focus group discussions in which girls' and young women's experiences, views and opinions were captured. The outcomes of these researches informed programmatic choices, including advocacy messages.

Girls and young women were also involved in program implementation in various ways. Following up on the youth advocacy trainings facilitated by the GAA International team in 2018, GAA teams in all program countries worked with groups of girls and youth to articulate and amplify their voices at various local, district, national and international fora, ranging from meetings with traditional leaders and school boards, to national youth parliaments, regional youth summits, the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child and the High-Level Political Forum. In many cases, the GAA was actively involved in creating or shaping these spaces for youth involvement.

In September 2019, 20 youth advocates from all ten GAA program countries were supported to meet for a week of networking, learning, exchange and workshops in the Netherlands during the GAA Global Youth Meet-Up (GYMU). As part of their program, the youth advocates met with the Dutch Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, where they made a strong case for international support for youth activists for gender equality. Highly valuable for all participants was their acquaintance and exchange with peers from other countries. Contacts established during the GYMU continue to inspire and connect youth advocates across countries.

In 2020, the international program team commissioned a learning review, covering five years of lessons in GAA youth advocacy and the link between global and local activism. The research report concludes that the GAA youth advocacy component has matured and strengthened over time, and identifies strengths, challenges and recommendations that have informed the



development of She Leads, a program that builds on the outcomes of the GAA<sup>13</sup>. Important challenges for this and other future work with youth advocates include:

- Clearly articulate in the ToC from the onset youth advocates' role and the change envisaged through their participation
- Ensure capacity support beyond project-specific outcomes and based on tools, resources, and frameworks that are adapted to the cultural context and advocacy level of youth advocates
- Careful consideration to meaningfulness; participation in high-level international events does not necessarily offer youth advocates more opportunities for actual influence than local or national level fora
- Follow-up after engagement in international advocacy opportunities needs to be incorporated in all work with youth advocates
- Commitment to invest in strengthening youth-led groups and organisations while treating them as equal partners, including flexible funding arrangements, linking and networking, and provision of physical space and facilities to organise - especially where this requires critical questioning of adult-led policies and procedures that reinforce power imbalances

COVID-19 affected the inclusion of girls and young women in several ways. At regional and international levels notably, the shift to online meetings and consultations opened up opportunities for increased G&YW engagement and influencing. At the same time however, this further excluded G&YW without access to internet, thereby deepening the gender/age digital divide. It is expected that after COVID-19, digital formats will in some instances remain the norm. Virtual advocacy also requires a particular skillset. Investments in building digital advocacy skills and ways to address the gender/age digital divide should be considered as part of wider influencing and youth engagement strategies.

### 3.5. CONTRIBUTION TO CORE INDICATORS FOR DIALOGUE & DISSENT

In line with the additional guidance on reporting on Dialogue & Dissent (D&D) programs provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2017, the GAA sees its contribution to the D&D core indicators as indicated in the table below. The GAA formally reported on these indicators in 2018, 2019 and 2020. For DD1, DD2, DD3 and DD5, information for 2016 and 2017 could be reconstructed. Where relevant, figures have been aligned with the updated outcome database and aggregated for the total programme period. These indicators will also be included in the final GAA IATI update of 31 July 2021.

Indicator name and description						
<b>DD1 # of laws, policies and norms, implemented for sustainable and inclusive development.</b>						
GAA contribution and description						
# of cases of practice change by government, private sector and key leaders to which the GAA programme contributed in 2018. Practice change is understood as improved implementation of laws, policies and norms for sustainable and inclusive development - as a result of the GAA programme.						
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
#	11	303	304	962	601	2181

<sup>13</sup> She Leads is a joint program by FEMNET The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), DCI-ECPAT Netherlands, Plan International Netherlands and Terre des Hommes Netherlands in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the 2021 - 2025 'Power of Voices' Strengthening Civil Society policy framework.

Indicator name and description						
DD2	# of laws, policies and norms/attitudes, blocked, adopted, improved for sustainable and inclusive development					
GAA contribution and description						
# of cases of policy change by government, private sector and key leaders to which the GAA programme contributed in 2018. Policy change is understood as a positive change (improvement, adoption, amendment, blocking or rejection) in laws, policies and norms/attitudes that affect sustainable and inclusive development - as a result of the GAA programme.						
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
#	13	37	223	299	179	751

Indicator name and description						
DD3	# of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage in 2019.					
GAA contribution and description						
# of times that CSOs and CSO networks succeed in 2018 in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage - as a result of the GAA programme.						
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
#	55	169	239	251	110	824

Indicator name and description	
<b>DD5</b>	<b># of CSOs with increased L&amp;A capacities</b>
GAA contribution and description	
<b>2018</b>	
22	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA programme in 2018 and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A, with CAT scores that indicate an increase in organisational capacities for L&A.
46	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA programme in 2018 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.015	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA programme in 2018, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.
<b>2019</b>	
32	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A, with CAT scores that indicate an increase in organizational capacities for L&A.
53	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.540	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA program in 2019, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.

Indicator name and description	
<b>DD5</b>	<b># of CSOs with increased L&amp;A capacities</b>
GAA contribution and description	
<b>2020</b>	
28	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2020 and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A, with CAT scores that indicate an increase in organizational capacities for L&A.
49	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.379	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA program in 2019, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.

Indicator name and description	
<b>DD6</b>	<b># of CSOs included in SPs programs</b>
GAA contribution and description	
<b>2018</b>	
46	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA programme in 2018 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.015	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA programme in 2018, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.
<b>2019</b>	
53	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.540	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA program in 2019, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.
<b>2020</b>	
49	# of contracted CSOs involved in the implementation of the GAA program in 2019 (not including the Dutch alliance organisations and their local offices and/or branches) and supported with capacity strengthening for L&A.
2.379	# of non-contracted CSOs, involved in the GAA program in 2019, including but not limited to CBOs, CSO networks, youth groups and girls clubs.



# GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE





## 4. THEORY OF CHANGE

Throughout the program implementation period, all APTs regularly assessed the validity and relevance of the assumptions and the pathways of change of their adapted Theories of Change. Most teams updated or fine tuned their ToCs on the basis of these reflections during their annual planning process, and most importantly, actively used the ToC to guide and adapt their work.

Although most assumptions and pathways remain valid and relevant, five years of program implementation did bring new insights and critical reflections on the overall GAA Theory of Change. Key lessons on how change works in policy and decision-making processes around Gender-based violence and economic empowerment of G&YW were presented in the Annual Plan for 2020 (submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2019) and the Annual Report 2019 (submitted in April 2020), including an updated visualisation of the ToC. The Final Evaluation of the program (submitted in December 2020) confirms the most important conclusions on the ToC and the envisaged pathways of change and underlying assumptions.

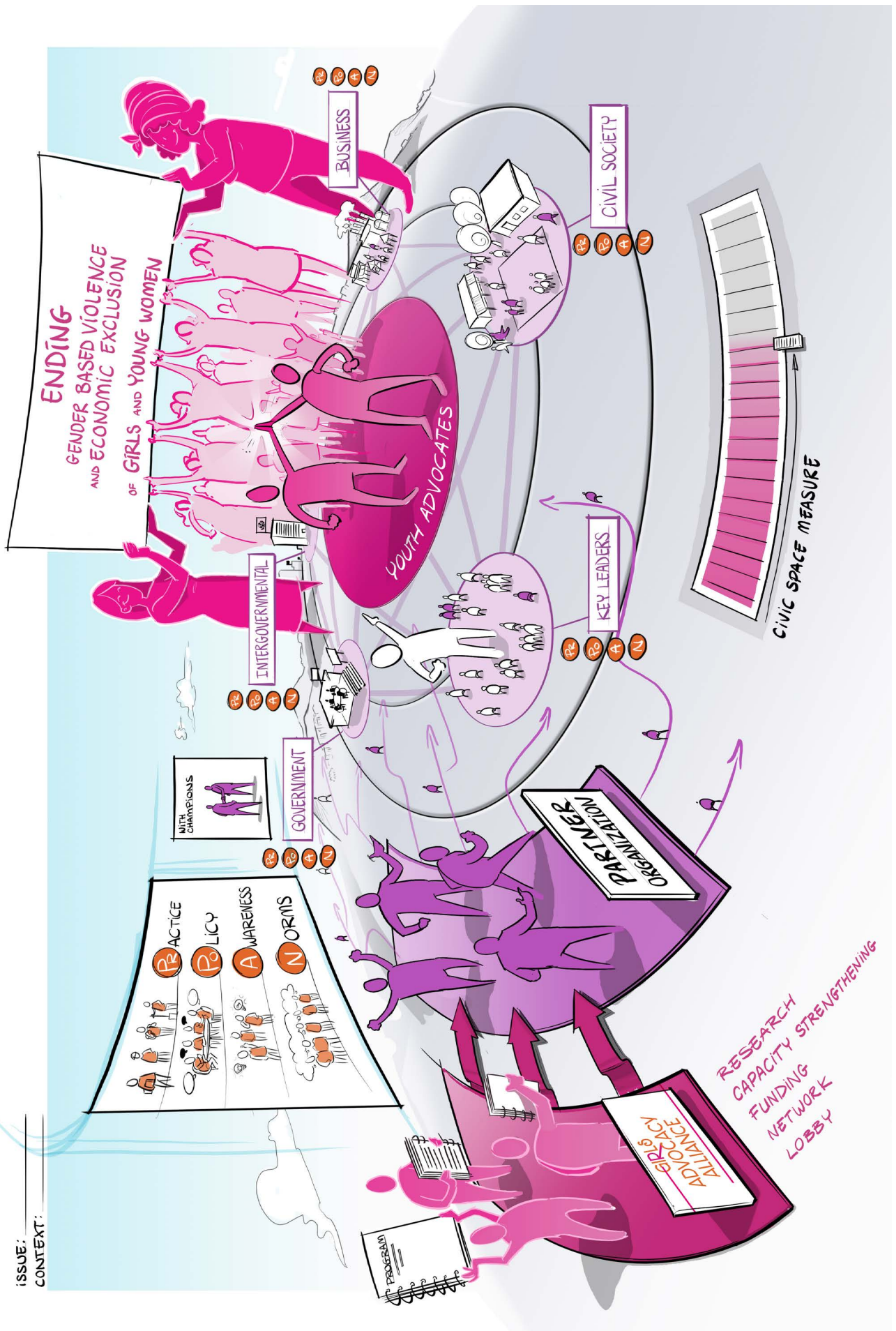
The updated visualisation was developed as a ‘discussion piece’ rather than as a replacement of the original ToC, that continued to serve as a suitable internal and external communication tool and overall umbrella supporting the steering of the alliance at the overall level. The updated visualisation is added below and integrates the outcomes of the reflection process, notably the influence of context and the role of youth advocates – two elements that were found to be missing in the original visual.

Key reflections on the GAA Theory of Change:

- Policy change on GBV and EE in GAA program countries does not evolve in a linear manner, as suggested by the agenda setting – policy change – practice change trichotomy. Rather, it moves along more unpredictable patterns, especially in the private sector and intergovernmental pathways.
- Local level government agencies and traditional and religious leaders play an important role in bridging the ‘implementation gap’ that exists in GAA program countries between formal policies and actual implementation and practices; especially if girls and young women are brought into local policy-making spaces.
- The shape and pace of processes of (policy) change also depend on context-specific configurations of political power (e.g. the presence of parliamentary opposition or dominant ruling coalitions) and the extent to which the issues at stake are rooted in cultural and religious beliefs and norms.
- Resistance from conservative and opposing forces (state and non-state) has been stronger than anticipated at the time of ToC development.
- In most GAA program countries, social norms change encompasses interplay between customary law and formal law, or in other words, between traditional and religious leaders and (local) political actors. The exact nature of these interactions is context-specific.
- Risks for negative publicity, image damage and loss of profit and/or productivity seem stronger motivators for larger corporations than business cases that outline the gains that can be made by realizing decent work principles of fair income, equal opportunities and safe workplaces for women.
- The role of youth advocates, particularly girls and young women advocates, has remained underexposed in the GAA ToC.

In addition to these reflections mainly based on experiences from 2016 - 2019, 2020 offered yet another perspective on change. While the ToC was developed on the premise of incremental change, the pandemic set in motion a process of crisis and disruptive change, the effects of which are to become observable in the coming years.

ISSUE:  
CONTEXT:





GIRLS  
ADVOCACY  
ALLIANCE





## 5. COLLABORATION, HARMONIZATION & LEARNING

### 5.1. COLLABORATION AND HARMONIZATION

#### Netherlands Embassies and Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Throughout the program period, regular contacts and exchange between GAA organizations (and their partners) and Dutch Embassies in program countries have been taking place, building on positive contacts established in the first years of the program. Embassy representatives participated in monitoring, planning and review meetings of Alliance Program Teams (APTs), including assessment of external contexts. Embassies actively participated in events and presentations (co-)organized by the alliance, such as the National Economic Dialogue for Girls and Young Women in Uganda, the launch of the GAA Private Sector Study Report in Kenya and the African Girls and the Law Report in Addis Ababa, the workshop with traditional and religious leaders (champions of change) in Ghana, the Gender Mainstreaming Symposium in the Philippines and the RMG Business Case in Bangladesh – all in 2019. On many of these occasions, the Embassy explicitly and publicly spoke out for girls' and young women's causes in support of GAA advocacy. GAA organisations also participated in exchange meetings and linking and learning sessions organized by Dutch embassies in the context of the Dialogue & Dissent framework and/or broader civil society engagement.

The step to more strategic direct collaboration beyond information exchange proved challenging. Main obstacles noted include varying strategic priorities, limited capacity for more intensive collaboration at the side of Embassies and lack of a clear vision on collaboration at the side of local GAA organizations. Positive developments were reported in 2019 however, such as the visit of the director of the Social Development Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during to Uganda, where she met and interacted with youth advocates supported by the GAA. Also in 2019, a delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Embassy visited the GAA program in Kibra-Nairobi, Kenya. In Ghana, the Dutch Embassy has been instrumental in facilitating linkages with the National House of Chiefs and with Queen Mothers. Much appreciated therefore was the attendance of the Embassy and a representative of the Ministry of a panel session in February 2020 with traditional leaders and youth advocates on their contributions in the GAA program. And in the Philippines, the Dutch Embassy and the GAA collaborated on a mapping of opportunities in Business Process Outsourcing in Travel and Tourism Industries. The Embassy moreover endorsed the alliance to the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines.

The COVID-19 outbreak limited opportunities for exchange and collaboration 2020. Those (online) instances of contact and exchange that took place mainly focused on the pandemic, such as the presentation of the GAA study on COVID-19 impact on girls and young women in the Philippines, reflection meetings on the impact of COVID-19 organised by the RNE in Uganda, and online dialogues by the embassy in Kenya. In Ghana, Embassy representatives took part in the GAA closing event (March 2021). At the international level in 2020, positive relationships built in previous years were in 2020 confirmed and further strengthened through active collaboration, notably with the Permanent missions New York and Geneva on the High Level Political Forum and various HRC engagements such as UPR, respectively, and with the Dutch Ambassador on Youth and Work, Tijmen Rooseboom.

In the Netherlands, GAA has shared its action plans and updates about ongoing advocacy actions with contact persons at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many of the advocacy initiatives implemented by GAA parties are also coordinated with other CSO platforms such as WO=MEN and at the Economic and Social Council (SER). The Ministry is involved in these platforms.

#### Collaboration at the alliance level

In a number of countries, GAA built on collaboration between Plan International and DCI-ECPAT during the Girl Power Program (2000 – 2015). In other instances, (partners of) Terre des Hommes joined these existing alliances; elsewhere new relationships had to be established

altogether. Despite these different dynamics, good working relationships were established at the level of the 14 APTs. Collaboration proved most effective where organisations had a clear image of the added value of each organisation and of the shared objectives and interests, like in Ghana and the Philippines. In the international program component notably, the alliance organisations have operated as a consortium on different platforms, for example by adopting joint meetings as a standard practice to present themselves as a united front rather than as separate organisations competing over visibility and branding at the UN and other high-level audiences. This level of collaboration was not only efficient, but also – according to advocacy targets – effective and leading to stronger engagements. Where organisations each focused on their own specific outcomes – either geographically or thematically – with little or no overlap in focus, like in Bangladesh, synergy remained less evident. In all countries, more regular sharing of best practices and more explicit attention to (the formulation of) joint objectives and shared interests could have (further) increased effectiveness.

## 5.2. CHALLENGES

Several challenges related to the program's design and organisation were addressed in the course of the implementation period. Following up on recommendations by the Mid Term Review in 2018, efforts were made in 2019 to limit the number of policy areas per program component, and to further align advocacy initiatives of the various organizations. Although this contributed to stronger focus in countries like Uganda, actual adaptive programming proved time consuming due to (financial) compliance requirements at different levels.

Weak integration between national level advocacy and efforts aimed at international accountability mechanisms was also signaled as a challenge by the MRT. In 2019 and 2020, increased integration was observed, notably during the UPR and VNR processes and the UN CRC, as a result of deliberate and well-targeted activities by the International APT to engage, support and facilitate national APTs in HRM processes. This did not only lead to articulated and participatory contributions on girls' and young women's issues to various reports to international accountability processes, but also to the inclusion of these observations and calls in final conclusions and reports. APTs moreover actively used these statements to further their advocacy towards national governments.

Investments in further strengthening of the quality of outcome data, including the development of an interactive data visualization tool (Power BI) paid off, and contributed positively to the effectiveness of the Final Term Evaluation process.

The alliance also recognized room for improvement in cross-country linking, learning and exchange. Steps were made in 2018 to address this challenge, notably the production of a learning booklet and three brief documentaries in the context of the Mid Term Review, based on advocacy cases from the program. In addition, in January and February 2019, regional Learning Meetings were convened in Addis Ababa and Bangkok where GAA organizations shared lessons learned and experiences. Despite the lack of face to face meetings, additional efforts were made in 2020 to capture, document and share key learnings, including a study on working with Youth Advocates by the international team. During the online GAA Closing Festival in December 2020, GAA organisations, partner CSOs, youth advocates and key stakeholders came together to celebrate five years of collaboration, exchange experiences and jointly reflect on learnings from the FTE report – a joint effort that reflected very well the collaborative spirit that had developed over the years and across countries and organisations.

Specific challenges in 2020 were in large part related to COVID-19. Dependence on internet connections made the alliance even more vulnerable for internet shutdowns, for example in Ethiopia. The shift to online and distance working as well as concerns about the coronavirus took a toll on staff mental health and wellbeing and affected collaboration. Organisations also experienced frustration from not being able to utilize part of their budgets and resources for sorely needed relief support. A crisis like COVID-19 calls for flexibility to reallocate budgets towards a fair balance between direct support and advocacy. This would have strengthened GAA organisations' credibility as interlocutors of (local) governments for COVID-19 response. Finally, in 2020, many of the GAA organisations faced the double burden of closing a comprehensive

program while at the same time developing a new and complex consortium program and subsidy request - all during a pandemic. The coincidence of these intensive processes demanded the utmost from staff and organisations across the alliance.

### 5.3. SUSTAINABILITY

The GAA Final Evaluation and the analysis of CSO partners' Capacity Assessments confirm that the outcomes of GAA capacity support are likely to be retained after the program's end. This holds especially for the institutionalization of participation of girls and young women – through the strengthening of youth advocates' capacities and organisations, and through sensitizing CSOs and CSO networks about working with youth. CSOs are moreover better equipped for effective advocacy and in many cases integrated this in their organisational policies and strategies. It is clear however, that meaningful and safe youth engagement will require continued investment, attention and funding.

The FTE moreover identifies important behavioral changes at the level of communities and community leaders, governments and intergovernmental agencies and the private sector as sustainable, including changes in attitudes of parents, religious leaders and youth; establishment of youth advocacy groups and community-level reporting mechanisms for GBV; changed laws at national, sub-national and local levels; units and desks established by governments; changes to UN mandates and policy texts; Codes of Conduct for decent work and safe working places; and sectoral covenants that include gender in due diligence.

A number of challenges to sustainability were noted as well. The setback in sexual violence, teenage pregnancies and girls' education as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic will need continued funding and attention. Without follow-up funding, campaigns and awareness raising are not likely to continue, and investments will remain necessary to ensure continued and safe engagement of youth advocates, especially at the level of international fora. Longer engagement is also needed to fundamentally change deep rooted norms and behaviours underlying harmful practices as child marriage in 'pockets of resistance' at local levels, and to ensure effective services for rescue, litigation and rehabilitation in support of raised levels of awareness and reporting of (online) CSEC. Change in these areas requires long term commitment and a change agenda beyond the current five-year framework.

### 5.4. LEARNING

The GAA programme has promoted a learning agenda centered around three common areas of interest: (1) social norms change; (2) the role of civil society in advocating for gender equality and (3) the link between gender-based violence and economic exclusion. Each country and regional GAA programme chose their preferred learning methods and activities. Learning outcomes have been disseminated globally through newsletters and regional learning exchanges. The midterm and final evaluations have been key moments for summarizing and assessing lessons learned.

During GAA's last year, all country teams compiled their main learnings and best practices gathered throughout the GAA programme. For instance, the regional Africa programme produced a booklet with 26 short case studies of advocacy initiatives conducted by GAA partners towards regional governance bodies. The regional APT in Asia developed a publication with the main reflections and learnings from the Asia program and conducted a Regional Learning Event (RLE) at the end of November 2020. In GAA countries, programme teams shared their learning findings with advocacy targets, youth advocates and other interested stakeholders through online webinars. In addition to the in-country activities, the GAA desk organized an online closing festival for all GAA teams to share and compare lessons learned. In one of the sessions, youth advocates from the GAA programme presented their feedback about the relevance and effectiveness of GAA's support to their mobilizing and influencing efforts.

The Final-Term Evaluation conducted last year had a strong learning component. It included a final learning event involving representatives of all fourteen programme components. Based on the preliminary findings and lessons learned presented by the external consultants in this

event, GAA teams jointly reflected on the recommendations put forward by the consultants. The GAA international team commissioned an additional learning research, with a particular focus on the effectiveness of GAA's support to youth advocates.

These evaluations reveal some important lessons learned:

- The final evaluation stresses that for both partner CSOs and alliance organisations (mainly Plan and TdH), the transition from a service delivery approach to policy influencing has required a re-think at both strategic and operational levels, including on how to observe and capture results. One method has been instrumental in making this shift: the regular Outcome Harvesting meetings. The OH meetings enabled organizations to understand their context from a political (policy) perspective and have served as moments of joint reflection on how a specific constellation of actors, their relationships and institutions, can stimulate (or block) agenda, policy and practice change. Instead of a narrow focus on outputs (often very prominent in service delivery interventions), the outcome harvesting method has shifted the focus towards the collection and interpretation of signs of change occurring in the outcome sphere of the programme.
- In supporting youth advocates, APTs adopted a flexible, adaptive approach. This enabled the APTs to respond to young people's needs and to pivot the programme towards becoming more youth-centred. However, the researchers also conclude that the role of youth advocates and their contribution to the envisaged change processes were not clearly fleshed out in GAA's ToC. Without clearly articulating this, there is the risk of tokenism or young people being used to serve the broader goals of the project.
- In adverse political conditions, GAA's multi-pronged approach of using different yet complementary influencing strategies is considered as an effective way to navigate a complex and unpredictable environment. Switching between different strategies has helped partners to put and keep advocacy asks on the agenda. Complementary strategies are media messages for raising and keeping public attention, youth advocates to inform and enthuse targeted government, community, and private sector representatives, and research findings to simulate and support political will to change the status quo.
- GAA's influencing efforts towards private sector actors were relatively less successful. Especially in those cases where individual companies were targeted, it proved to be difficult to change their policies and practices. GAA partners achieved better results along the private sector pathway by working through associations and apex organisations rather than small scale enterprises, and entering the sector with a research or business case. Finally, as with other pathways, collaboration with media/media campaigns has helped in spreading the message.

#### Looking ahead and taking lessons further: She Leads

These and other lessons learned were reflected on and incorporated into the development of She Leads, a joint program by The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), DCI-ECPAT Netherlands, Plan International Netherlands and Terre des Hommes Netherlands in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the 2021 - 2025 'Power of Voices' Strengthening Civil Society policy framework. She Leads places youth (girls and young women)-led advocacy at the centre of its ToC, and further builds on the successful experiences, as well as the lessons from challenges encountered during the five years of the Girls Advocacy Alliance.

With its aims to increase sustained influence of girls and young women on decision-making and to transform gender norms in formal and informal institutions, She Leads gives ample space for the voice and vote of girls and young women in its management and governance, and works from shared principles of girls' and young women's autonomy and meaningful participation. The governance structure is designed to decentralise decision-making and to address power inequalities in the contexts of the program as well as within the consortium itself. Even more explicit than in GAA, capacity strengthening support and joint learning between civil society organisations (CSOs), girl-led groups and young feminist organisations is at the core of She Leads, with girls and young women in the driver's seat, and a facilitating, linking and coordinating role for the consortium organisations. Beyond capacity support, She Leads will also fund and resource girl-led/young feminist organising, collective action and activism, and catalyse the growth and strength of social movements and collective action for girls rights.



Finally, an invaluable constant and driving factor in both programs is the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), specifically the Social Development Department (DSO) and its Civil Society Division and Taskforce Women's Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG). The MFA's long-term commitment to advocacy for gender equality and the position of girls and young women, and its openness to dialogue and dissent are recognised and appreciated by partners and stakeholders across program countries. The Girls Advocacy Alliance thanks the MFA and its representatives with whom we have had the opportunity to work over the past five years for their support and unique collaboration!



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The Girls Advocacy Alliance is one of the strategic partners of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Dialogue and Dissent framework.