



# Investing in adolescent girls

## Key changes in the bilateral donor funding landscape - 2021 update

Megan Devonald, Silvia Guglielmi and Nicola Jones

July 2023



# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Investments in adolescent girls at the global level</b>	<b>3</b>
Overall findings	3
Breakdown by donor, sector, channel of delivery and recipients	5
Gender and intersectionality	10
<b>Country case studies: Bangladesh and Ethiopia</b>	<b>12</b>
Overall findings	12
Breakdown by sector and channel of delivery	15
Gender and intersectionality	19
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>25</b>

## Tables

Table 1: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, 2020 and 2021	7
Table 2: Top 10 recipient countries of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by amount (\$ millions), 2020 and 2021	8
Table 3: Amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by donor, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, 2020-2021	14
Table 4: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, Bangladesh	16
Table 5: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, Ethiopia	17
Table 6: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by channel of delivery, Bangladesh and Ethiopia	18

## Figures

Figure 1: Amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2016-2021	3
Figure 2: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by age category, 2020-2021	4
Figure 3: Amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA with gender principal tagging, 2020-2021	4
Figure 4: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA with gender principal tagging, 2016-2021	5
Figure 5: Donors' gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2020-2021, by amount (\$ billions)	6
Figure 6: Donors' gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2020-2021, by percentage of donor's total ODA	6
Figure 7: Young people with disabilities-targeted ODA, 2020-2021 (as a share of gender- and adolescent ODA)	10
Figure 8: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, 2016-2021	10
Figure 9: Amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA going to child marriage programming, 2020-2021	11
Figure 10: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, Bangladesh, 2016-2021	13
Figure 11: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, Ethiopia, 2016-2021	13
Figure 12: Amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by donor, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, 2021 (\$ millions)	14
Figure 13: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, Bangladesh, 2016-2021	19
Figure 14: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, Ethiopia, 2016-2021	20
Figure 15: Percentage and amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA targeting young people with disabilities, Bangladesh and Ethiopia 2020-2021	20
Figure 16: Percentage and amount of child marriage-targeted ODA, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2020-2021	21
Figure 17: ODA targeted to child marriage programming, Bangladesh, 2016-2021	22
Figure 18: ODA targeted to child marriage programming, Ethiopia, 2016-2021	22
Figure 19: Percentage and amount of young refugee-targeted ODA, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2020-2021	23
Figure 20: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA to refugees in Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2016-2021	24

# Introduction

At the halfway point to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – adopted in 2015 with deadline of 2030 – there is an urgent need for a detailed and up-to-date understanding of funding to support the wellbeing and development of adolescent girls. If the SDGs are to be achieved, in line with the Leave No One Behind agenda<sup>1</sup>, it is vital that adolescent programming (particularly programmes that aim to reach the most marginalized people) is appropriately funded (Guglielmi et al., 2022). While it is important to assess the efficient and effective use of funds for adolescent-focused programming, it is also critical to understand the level of funding over time – as well as the sectors and populations targeted for investment – to ensure that specific sectors and populations are not left behind.

Adolescent girls are going through a unique part of the life cycle – one that brings with it substantial social, physical and psychological changes (Patton et al., 2018). These changes are increasingly influenced by gender norms during early adolescence, and girls often experience diminishing opportunities whereby they are forced down particular gendered pathways (Marcus and Harper, 2015; Watson, 2015).

This time period is described as a critical window of opportunity, where interventions can have a major impact countering poverty, gender norms and inequality, and where positive development trajectories can be nurtured (UNICEF, 2017). Investments in adolescents can, therefore, deliver a triple dividend, benefiting adolescents now, their future as adults and their potential children (Sheehan et al., 2017).

The funding landscape for adolescents, however, lacks transparency and disaggregation, which makes it difficult to track these investments (Devonald et al., 2023; Arutyunova et al., 2022; Marsh and Blake, 2019). Despite these challenges, the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme has developed a methodology to estimate the amount of investments that are gender- and adolescent-targeted, in order to provide a broad estimation of the volume of funding directed towards programming for adolescent girls.

Our recent report '*Investing in adolescent girls*' mapped investments in adolescent girls using the most recent data available at the time (2016-2020). We found that the amount of funding going to adolescents does not match the needs of the large adolescent and youth populations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and that this funding was distributed unequally across sectors and populations (Devonald et al., 2023). The report established an important baseline regarding the adolescent funding landscape; it is vital to continue to update this research, in order to provide the most up-to-date data, particularly in a context of cuts in official development assistance (ODA) by, for example, the United Kingdom (UK), and in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic recovery.

This new report provides an overview of key changes in the adolescent funding landscape by incorporating newly published financing data from 2021. It highlights the continued imperative to increase investments to accelerate progress for and with adolescent girls.

<sup>1</sup> 'Leave no one behind (LNOB)' is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. See: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.



# Methodology

To map investments focused on adolescent girls, we reviewed data from the largest donor official development assistance (ODA) tracking dataset: that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Creditor Reporting System (OECD-CRS) at the global and country level during 2021 and compared it to data from previous years (2016-2020). At the global level, we selected the top 10 bilateral donors in terms of support for gender equality: the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, the United States (US), European Union (EU) institutions, Japan, Sweden, Canada, Netherlands, France and Norway (Donor Tracker, 2019)

and explored data for all low- and middle-income (LMICs) countries. We also compiled country case studies for Bangladesh and Ethiopia and explored data from all official donors on the OECD-CRS system. We selected ODA that has gender equality as a principal or significant objective of the project/programme<sup>2</sup> and then used key word searches of project titles and long descriptions in the OECD-CRS database for age-specific terms to identify funding that goes towards adolescent and youth- specific projects/programmes. For more information on the methodology please see Devonald et al., 2023.



A group of adolescent girls participating in a Girls club in Oromia, Ethiopia © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

<sup>2</sup> To identify ODA that supports gender equality and women's rights OECD-CRS uses a three-point scoring system to screen projects. A score of 0 (not targeted) is given to projects that have not been found to target gender equality; a score of 1 (significant) is given to projects that have gender equality as an important objective but where it is not the main reason for the project; and a score of 2 (principal) is given if gender equality is the main objective of a project and is fundamental to its design and results, projects/programmes that have not been screened are left blank (GENDERNET, 2016).

# Investments in adolescent girls at the global level

## Key messages

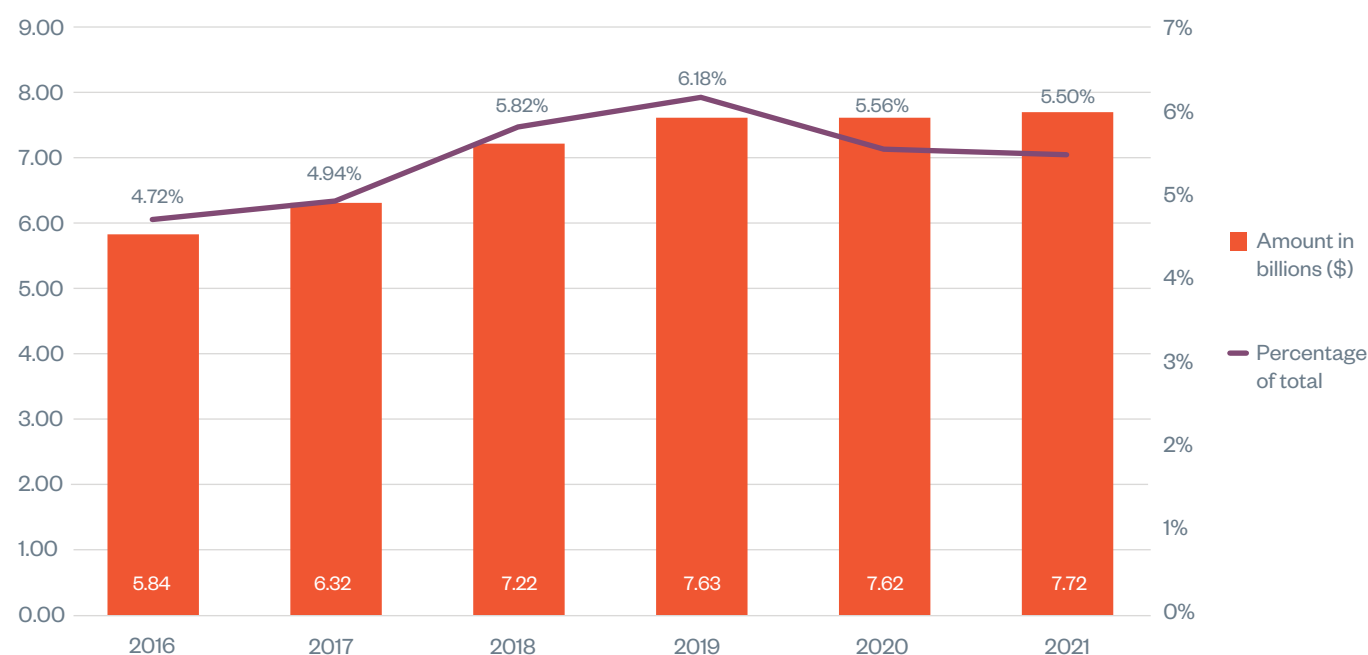
- The amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA provided by the top 10 bilateral donors included in this review increased marginally from \$7.6 billion in 2020 to \$7.7 billion in 2021.
- The increase in gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA has not matched the overall increase in ODA provided by these donors over this timeframe. Accordingly, the percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA as a share of overall ODA decreased from 5.6% to 5.5%.
- The amount going towards programming that clearly identifies 'adolescents' as a population group decreased significantly from \$1.6 billion in 2020 to \$1.3 billion in 2021.
- The amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA that targets young people with disabilities doubled – albeit from a low baseline – from \$0.1 billion in 2020 to \$0.2 billion in 2021. In contrast, the amount of investment in child marriage programming decreased from \$1.8 billion in 2020 to \$1.7 billion in 2021.
- One major concern is that the amount of aid that has gender equality as its main focus (marked as 'gender principal') decreased significantly, from \$1.7 billion in 2020 to \$1.3 billion in 2021.

## Overall findings

Our review found a slight increase in the amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021: \$7.7 billion (which is 5.5% of total ODA from the top 10 gender equality donors), up from \$7.6 billion in 2020. However, despite this increase in the overall amount, the percentage of total ODA decreased slightly from 5.6% to 5.5%. This is the lowest annual percentage since 2017, after annual

increases between 2016 and 2019 and then a significant decrease in 2020 (see Figure 1). This means that the share of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA (5.5%) still does not match the high share of adolescent and youth populations in LMICs (with an average of 25% and 32% in less-developed countries and least-developed countries, respectively) (UNFPA, 2022).

**Figure 1: Amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2016–2021**



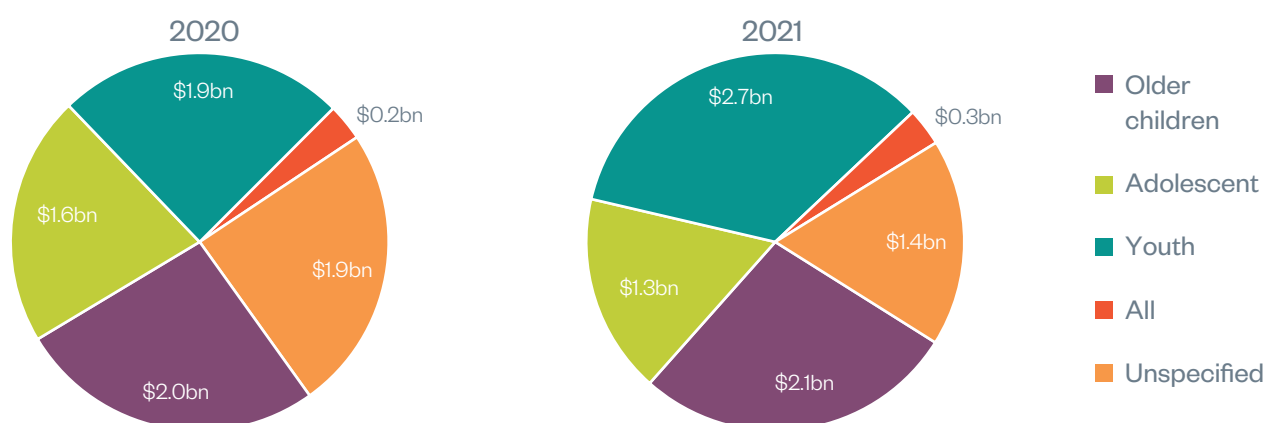
Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

Our research also examined the age ranges that are identified in this gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA using key word searches. As highlighted in our last report, the data provided in the OECD-CRS database are not always clearly disaggregated, and rarely identify the specific age range that is targeted by the project or programme. In 2021, 17.7% of the gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA used unspecific terminology (such as 'young people' or 'girls') compared to 24.5% in 2020. In addition, the amount of ODA going to programming that clearly identifies 'adolescents' as a target population group decreased from \$1.6 billion in 2020 to \$1.3 billion in 2021, while the amount going to programming that identified 'youth' as a target population group increased from \$1.9 billion in 2020 to \$2.7 billion in 2021. This suggests that

the 'adolescent' age group has been deprioritized and that there has been an increased focus on older young people, with youth typically defined as 15-24 years (see Figure 2).

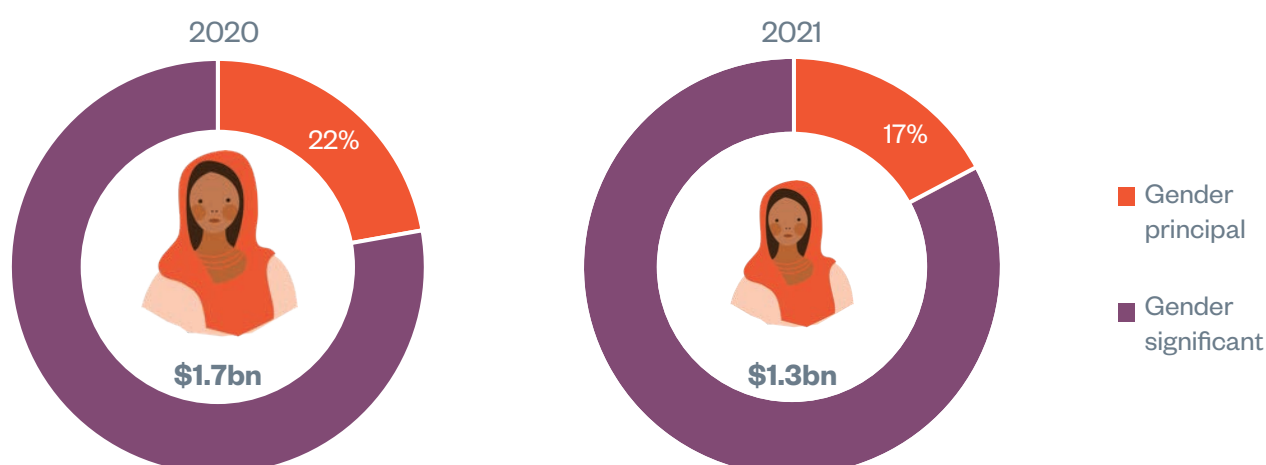
All of the ODA included in this review had gender as either a principal or significant objective of the programme. As in 2020, we found that only a small proportion of the gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA had gender as a principal objective, with most of the ODA included in this review having gender equality as an important – but not primary – objective. The amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA that had gender as a principal objective increased steadily from 2016 to 2020, but decreased from \$1.7 billion in 2020 (22%) to \$1.3 billion in 2021 (17%) (see Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 2: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by age category, 2020-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 3: Amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA with gender principal tagging, 2020-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



**Figure 4: Gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA with gender principal tagging, 2016-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

## Breakdown by donor, sector, channel of delivery and recipients

There have been a few significant changes in the amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA provided by donor. The top three gender-and-adolescent donors in 2021 were Canada, followed by Germany and France, compared to the UK, Germany and France in 2020. Canada increased its gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA from \$1.02 billion to \$1.22 billion, climbing from the fourth place in the list of top donors in 2020 to first place in 2021 – largely as a result of its Feminist International Assistance Policy, which continues to prioritise gender-focused programming (Global Affairs Canada, 2017) (see Figure 5).

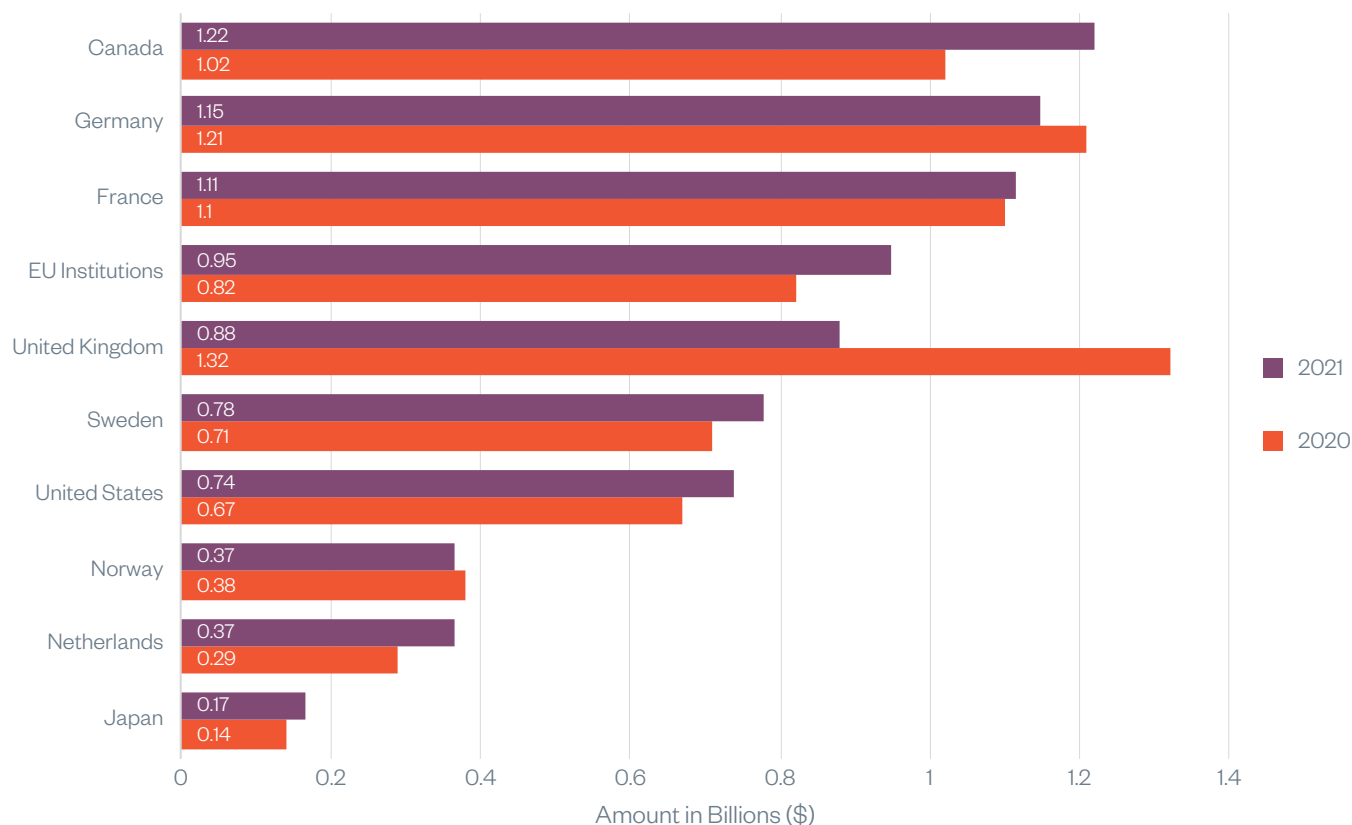
In previous years (2016-2020), there was an overall downward trend in the amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA provided by the US. While this trend reversed in 2021, with an increase from \$0.67 billion to \$0.74 billion, the amount is still lower than the levels provided from 2016 to 2019. EU institutions also increased their investments from \$0.82 billion to \$0.95 billion, in line with their gender equality strategy (2020-2025), which aims to ensure that 85% of new EU actions contribute to gender equality by 2025 (European Commission, 2020).

By contrast, the United Kingdom was one of only three countries in the list of top donors that decreased its investments in gender- and adolescent targeted ODA between 2020 and 2021. It also registered the largest decrease, with its investments falling by over one third

(33%) from \$1.3 billion to \$0.9 billion. In addition, the percentage of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA in the UK's total ODA budget decreased from 10.6% to 9.5% (see Figure 6). This is the result of large cuts to ODA in 2021 which saw the UK reduce its aid spending from 0.7% of gross national income (GNI), the UN and nationally legislated target, to 0.5%. These cuts have been justified as a 'temporary measure' to mitigate the economic implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it has been announced that these cuts are not likely to be reversed until 2027/2028 (Loft and Brien, 2022). While the empowerment of women and girls is one of the UK's four ODA priorities, these cuts have had a significant impact on both the amount and percentage going towards gender-and-adolescent-targeted programming.

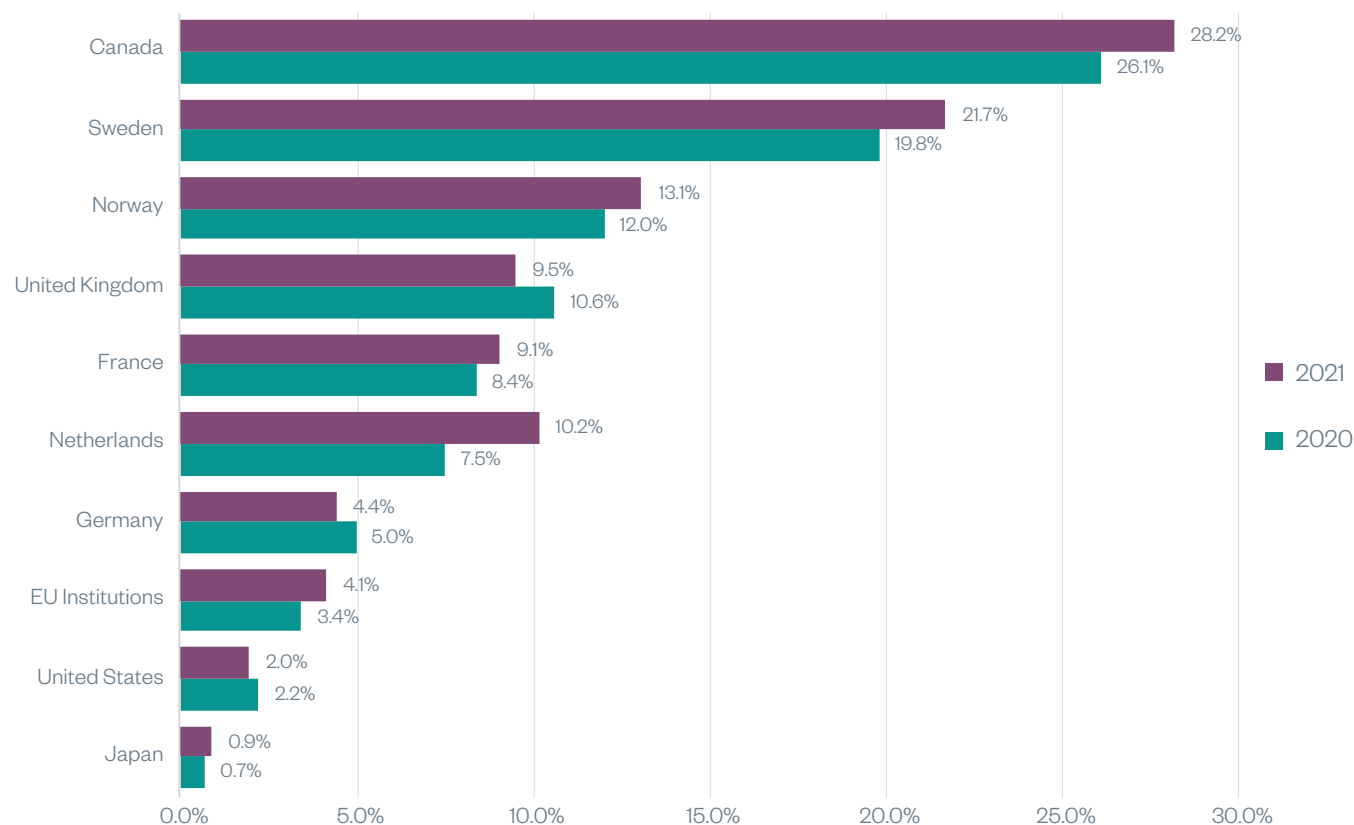
When reviewing the data from 2020, we found that gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA was not distributed equally across the different SDG-related sectors. The majority of the funding went to education (SDG 4) (51%), followed by health (SDG 3) (14%), gender equality (SDG 5) (11%) and poverty alleviation (SDG 1) (11%). A similar pattern was seen in 2021, with the highest share of investment going to education (45%), followed by health (17%), gender equality (11%), and poverty alleviation (12%) (see Table 1). However, the amount of funding going to education decreased from \$3.9 billion to \$3.5 billion. As a result, it accounted for a lower percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA: 45% in 2021 compared to 51% in 2020.

**Figure 5: Donors' gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2020-2021, by amount (\$ billions)**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 6: Donors' gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, 2020-2021, by percentage of donor's total ODA**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Table 1: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, 2020 and 2021**

Sustainable Development Goal (by level of ODA, from highest to lowest)	Sector	2021		2020		% of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA 2021	Percentage change %*
		Amount in millions (\$)	Total in millions (\$)	Amount in millions (\$)	Total in millions (\$)		
SDG 4 Quality education	Basic education	1029	3460	1402	3894	44.8%	-11.2%
	Post-secondary education	1222		1278			
	Secondary education	567		671			
	Education, level unspecified	642		544			
SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing	Population policies/programmes and reproductive health	759	1309	667	1037	16.9%	26.2%
	Basic health	463		283			
	Health, general	72		81			
	Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)	15		6			
SDG 5 Gender equality	Government and civil society – including violence against women and girls	821	821	779	779	10.6%	5.4%
SDG 1 No Poverty	Emergency response	597	924	604	836	12.0%	10.5%
	Other social infrastructure and services	327		232			
SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Business and other services	66	124	72	158	1.6%	21.8%
	Industry	42		58			
	Communications	7		8			
	Transport and storage	8		18			
				0			
SDG 15 Life on land	Agriculture	218	234	144	149	3.0%	57.2%
	Forestry	17		5			
SDG 2 Zero hunger	Development food assistance	157	157	105	105	2.0%	49.6%
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Conflict, peace and security	147	147	131	131	1.9%	12.1%
SDG 13 Climate action	General environment protection	48	73	37	81	1.0%	-9.4%
	Reconstruction, relief and rehabilitation	25		33			
	Disaster prevention and preparedness	1		11			
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation	Water supply and sanitation	118	118	58	58	1.5%	103.7%

Sustainable Development Goal (by level of ODA, from highest to lowest)	Sector	2021		2020		% of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA 2021	Percentage change %*
		Amount in millions (\$)	Total in millions (\$)	Amount in millions (\$)	Total in millions (\$)		
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	Banking & financial services	77	84	23	33	1.1%	155.3%
	Trade policies and regulations	5		8			
	Mineral resources and mining	1		1			
	Tourism	1		1			
SDG 7 Clean and affordable energy	Energy generation, renewable sources	5	21	5	30	0.3%	-31.5%
	Energy distribution	3		2			
	Energy policy	13		23			
SDG 14 Life below water	Fishing	9	9	6	6	0.1%	45.6%

\* Purple shows negative percentage changes, light orange shows positive percentage changes under 20% and green shows positive percentage changes over 20%

Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Table 2: Top 10 recipient countries of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by amount (\$ millions), 2020 and 2021**

2021		2020	
Country	Amount in millions(\$)	Country	Amount in millions(\$)
Jordan	304	South Sudan	251
Türkiye	271	Ethiopia	245
Bangladesh	238	Morocco	225
Ethiopia	207	Tanzania	199
Democratic Republic of the Congo	183	Nigeria	193
Morocco	179	Lebanon	187
South Sudan	178	Syrian Arab Republic	168
Tanzania	161	Jordan	156
Mozambique	158	Mozambique	154
Lebanon	156	Bangladesh	152

Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) were highlighted in our report on 2020 investments as key underfunded sectors. Both saw large increases in 2021, with funding for SDG 6 increasing from \$58 million in 2020 to \$118 million in 2021, and for SDG 8 increasing from \$33 million to \$84 million. Agriculture also saw a large increase (\$144 million to \$218 million). However, climate change, which was highlighted as an underfunded sector in 2020, saw a decrease in funding from \$81 million in 2020 to \$73 million in 2021. This highlights the need to increase funding for climate change programming that is responsive to gender and to the needs of adolescents.

The top 10 recipient countries of gender- and -adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021 remained fairly similar to those in 2020, with most being fragile contexts and all

having low levels of gender equality (based on SIGI<sup>3</sup> and GDI<sup>4</sup> scores). A few key changes included the addition of Türkiye and Democratic Republic of the Congo to the top 10 in 2021, and the removal of Syria and Nigeria (see Table 2). Both Türkiye and Jordan received substantial increases as a result of large investments in education and social protection given that both countries are supporting large refugee populations. Similarly to 2020 data, Morocco was amongst the top recipients of gender-and-adolescent ODA as a result of a \$122 million investment in university scholarships from France. South Sudan saw a significant reduction in gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA, from \$251 million in 2020 to \$178 million in 2021 because of significant cuts in funding from the United Kingdom. Similarly, funding to Syria fell from \$168 million to \$108 million and to Nigeria from \$193 million to \$155 million.



A 12-year-old Rohingya girl in a camp, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

<sup>3</sup> The OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index.

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Development Programme Gender-related Development Index.

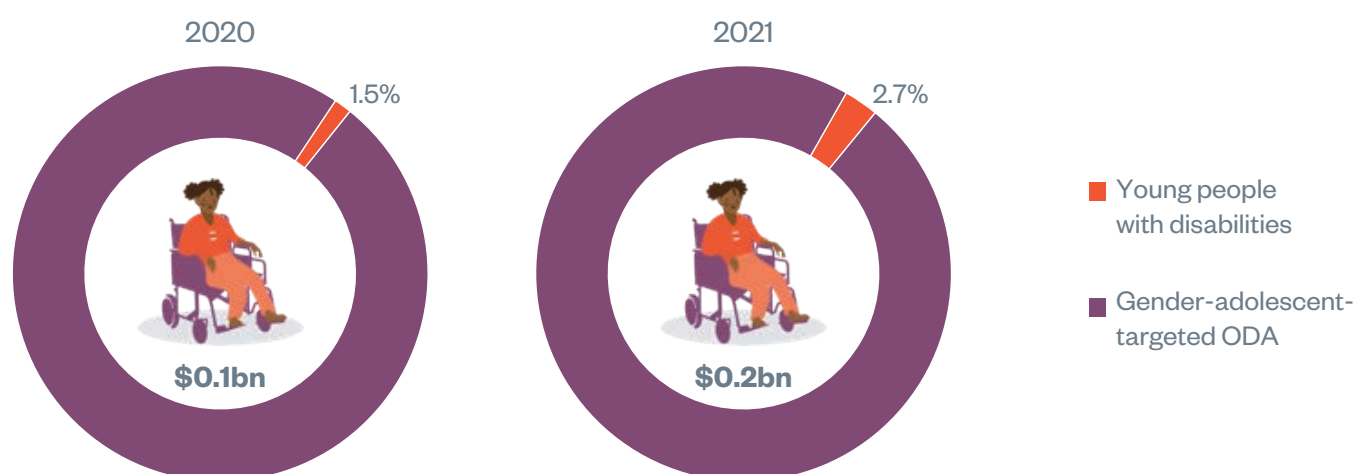
## Gender and intersectionality

The most marginalised adolescents must be included appropriately in adolescent financing if investments are to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 'leave no one behind'. Our previous report highlighted that this was not the case. In particular, young people with disabilities received very limited funding: only 1.5% of the ODA identified in the 2020 review included young people with disabilities as a target population.

2021 saw a slight improvement, with the percentage of ODA targeting young people with disabilities within gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA increasing to

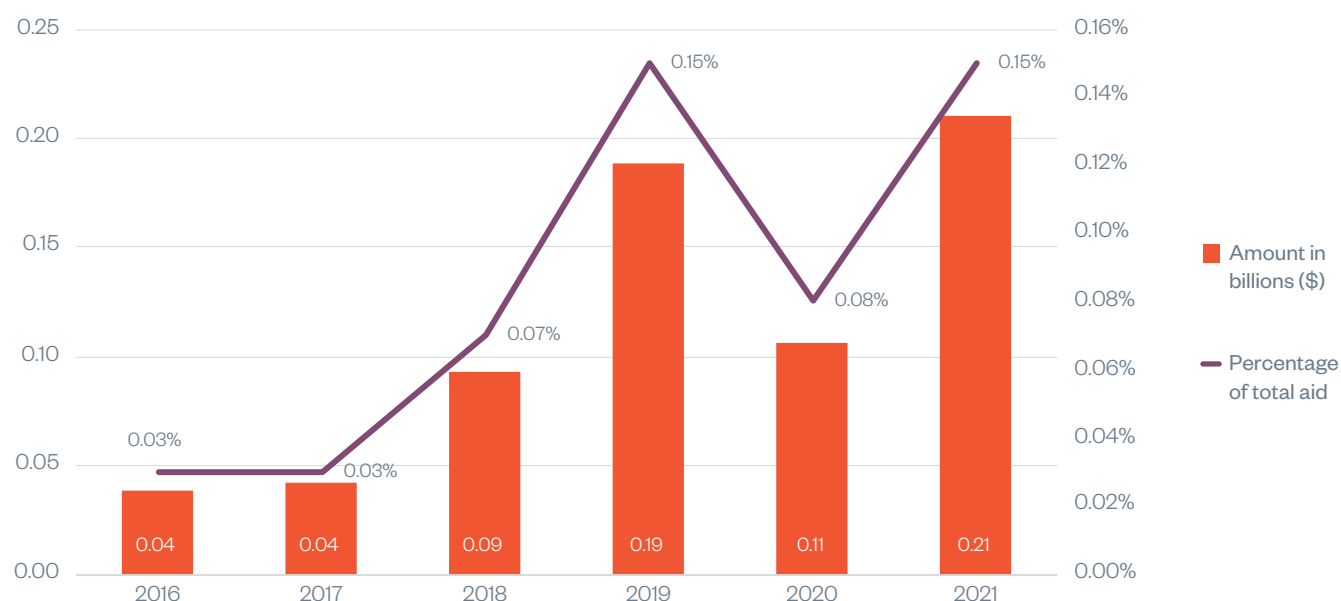
2.7% (see Figure 7), which amounts to 0.15% of total ODA. The amount provided doubled from \$0.1 billion in 2020 to \$0.2 billion in 2021 (see Figure 8). This has increased to higher than pre-pandemic levels, exceeding the previously highest amount of \$0.19 billion in 2019), suggesting that the dip in funding for young people with disabilities in 2020 was a temporary impact linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. The top donors of ODA targeted towards young people with disabilities in 2021 were Canada (\$65 million) followed by Norway (\$43 million), the majority of which was provided to education and the emergency response.

**Figure 7: Young people with disabilities-targeted ODA, 2020–2021 (as a share of gender-and adolescent ODA)**



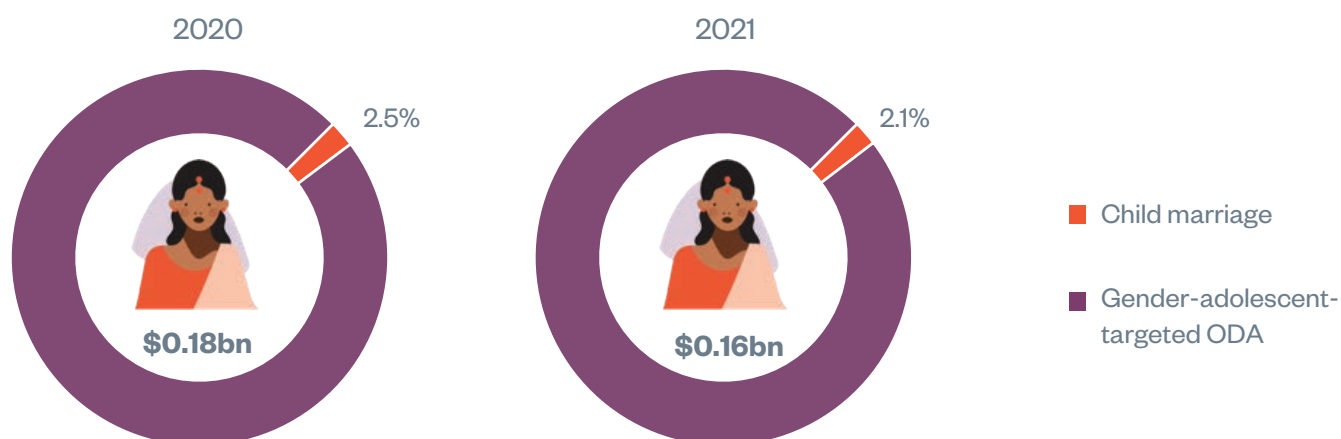
Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 8: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, 2016–2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 9: Amount and percentage of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA going to child marriage programming, 2020-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

Our review also examines the amount of investment that goes to child marriage programming.<sup>5</sup> In 2020, funding for child marriage programming totalled around \$1.8 billion, falling to \$1.7 billion in 2021. Its share also decreased, falling from 2.5% to 2.1% of total gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA (see Figure 9). Canada increased its funding in this area from \$57 million to \$68 million, while Norway

and the UK saw the largest decreases, from \$36 million to \$27 million and \$19 million to \$13 million, respectively. Given the importance of ending child marriage for the achievement of a number of SDGs, this decrease in funding to programming that aims to tackle this challenge is a worrying trend.



<sup>5</sup> This was determined by using key word searches in project titles and long descriptions of child, early, forced and/or marriage (CEFM). We recognise that there may be other programming that contributes to the ending of child marriage that might not specify this in the project titles or long descriptions.



# Country case studies: Bangladesh and Ethiopia

## Key messages

- In 2021, Ethiopia received the lowest amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA it had received in six years. Funding fell from \$299 million in 2020 to \$255 million in 2021, a reduction of 15%. Cuts in funding from the UK in 2021 had a significant impact on gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA to Ethiopia, given the country's high reliance on the UK for ODA in previous years.
- By contrast, Bangladesh saw a large increase, with gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA increasing from \$321 million in 2020 to \$373 million in 2021. Bangladesh was less impacted by falling levels of ODA from the UK as a result of higher investments from a range of other donors.
- The amount going to child marriage programming in both Bangladesh and Ethiopia registered an overall increase from 2016 to 2021, yet the actual amount invested remains low.

## Overall findings

We reviewed the data on the OECD-CRS database for Bangladesh and Ethiopia for all donors included on the database in order to gain a greater understanding of country-level investments. The amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA going to Bangladesh increased from \$321 million in 2020 to \$373 million in 2021, bringing it back into line with the high levels provided in 2018 (see Figure 10). The percentage of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA has increased to 5.81%, slightly higher than the global average. While Bangladesh also saw large reductions in the amount of ODA provided by the UK (which fell from \$73 million in 2020 to \$34 million in 2021), the impact of these cuts was felt primarily within the strategic partnership between the UK and BRAC. As a result of its cuts, the UK fell from its position as top donor to fifth place, yet the impact on Bangladesh's overall gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA was less severe because it does not rely as heavily on the UK for ODA as Ethiopia, which has relied on the UK for the majority of its ODA.

Bangladesh has also benefited from significant increases in the amount provided by other donors. The US, in particular, increased its support from \$15 million in 2020 to \$49 million in 2021. This has included \$27 million allocated to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bangladesh for Rohingya refugees, including child protection, and \$5 million to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for SRH and gender-based violence (GBV) services for women and adolescent girls.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), which is now the top donor of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, also increased the amount of ODA it provided from \$33 million in 2020 to \$73 million in 2021 (this was largely the result of greater investments in secondary and vocational education. Korea moved up from 19th to 7th place in the list of donors to Bangladesh following a large increase in funding from \$0.7 million in 2020 to \$21 million in 2021. This included a \$17 million investment in education and training centres and a \$1 million investment in programming on menstrual health management for adolescent girls. This increase aligns with Korea's overall ODA budget strategy, which positions Bangladesh as a key priority partner, and as Korea's second-biggest recipient of ODA (Dhaka Tribune, 2023).

In sharp contrast, the amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA for Ethiopia fell from \$299 million in 2020 to \$255 million in 2021, its lowest amount in six years (see Figure 11). The percentage of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA as a share of total ODA increased from 5.49% to 5.99%, but this was driven by an overall and large decrease in the total ODA going to Ethiopia in 2021. This is likely to have been the result of significant funding cuts from the United Kingdom's, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which confirmed that Ethiopia saw the largest decrease in overall ODA from its 2021 budget cuts (Taylor, 2022).

In 2020, we found that the UK was the largest provider of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA. As a result of its budget cuts, however, 2021 saw the UK slip from first

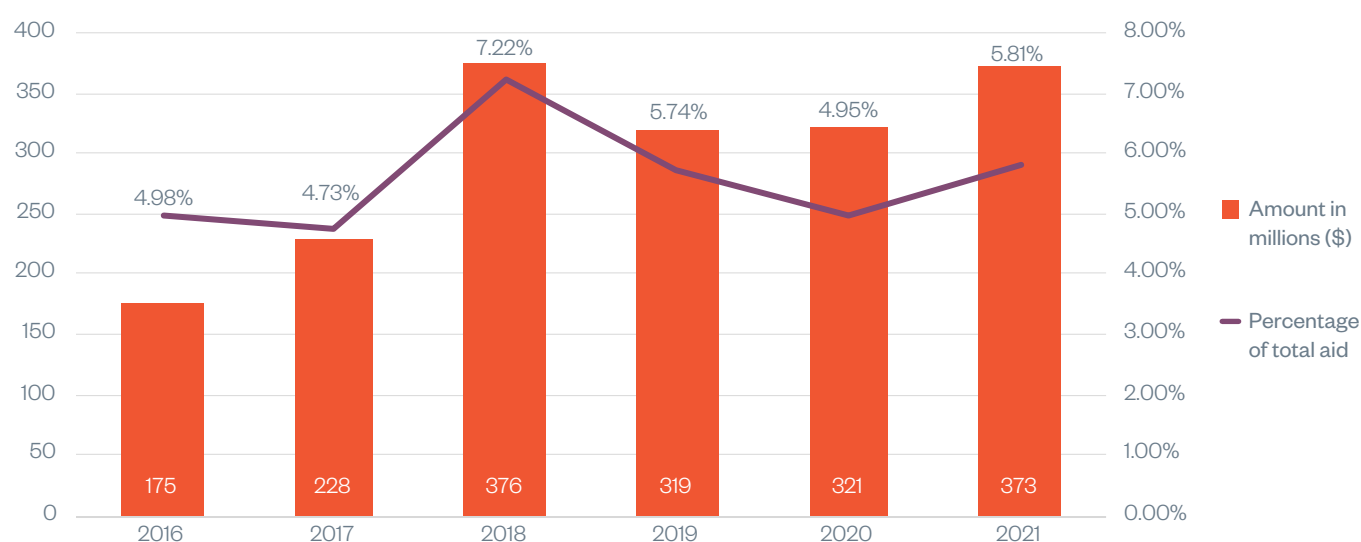


to second place in the list of top 10 donors included in this review (See Figure 12) and a reduction from \$96 million in 2020 to \$37 million in 2020 (a decrease of 62%) that has had a significant impact on the amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA going to Ethiopia. The main impact of these cuts has been felt by health and SRH services and by the emergency response.

While the US is now the largest donor to Ethiopia, it also saw a decrease in funding from \$71 million in 2020 to \$52 million in 2021 (26%), with most of this

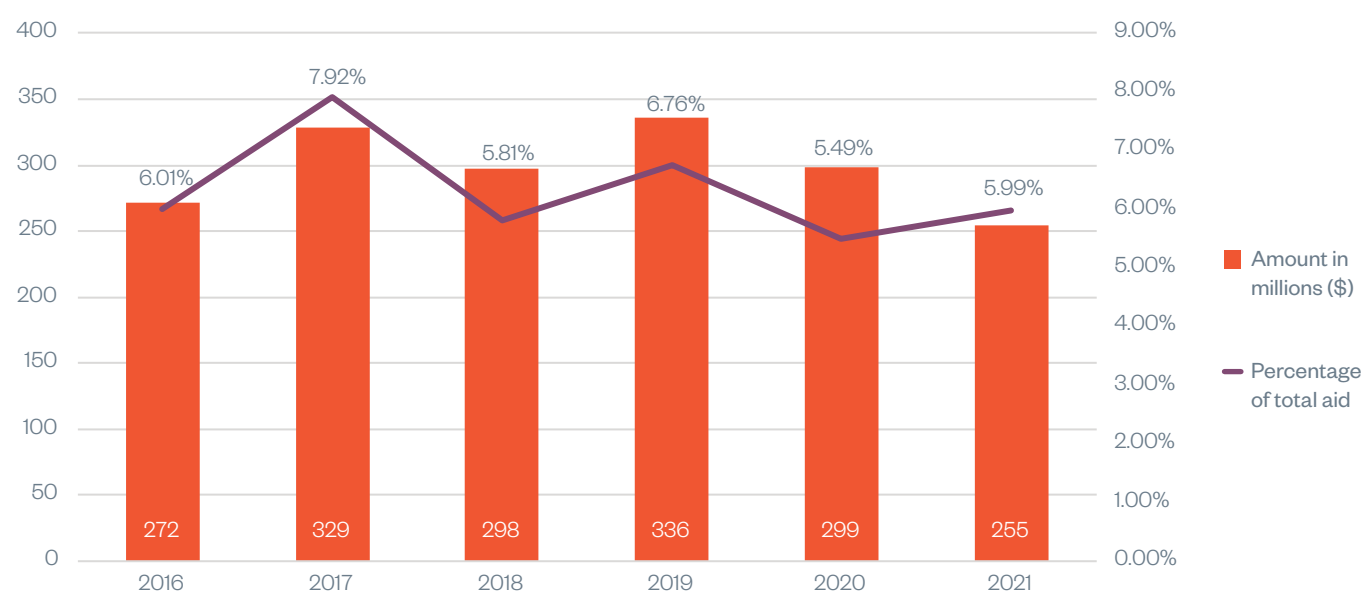
allocated to education and food assistance. Germany also registered a large decrease, from \$39 million to \$21 million. Nevertheless, some donors increased their ODA to Ethiopia. Canada, for example, increased its support from \$19 million in 2020 to \$34 million in 2021, and support from Sweden increased from \$16 million in 2020 to \$26 million in 2021. These increases were invested primarily in SRH, emergency response and education (see also Table 3 for the amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by donor, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, 2020-2021).

**Figure 10: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, Bangladesh, 2016-2021**

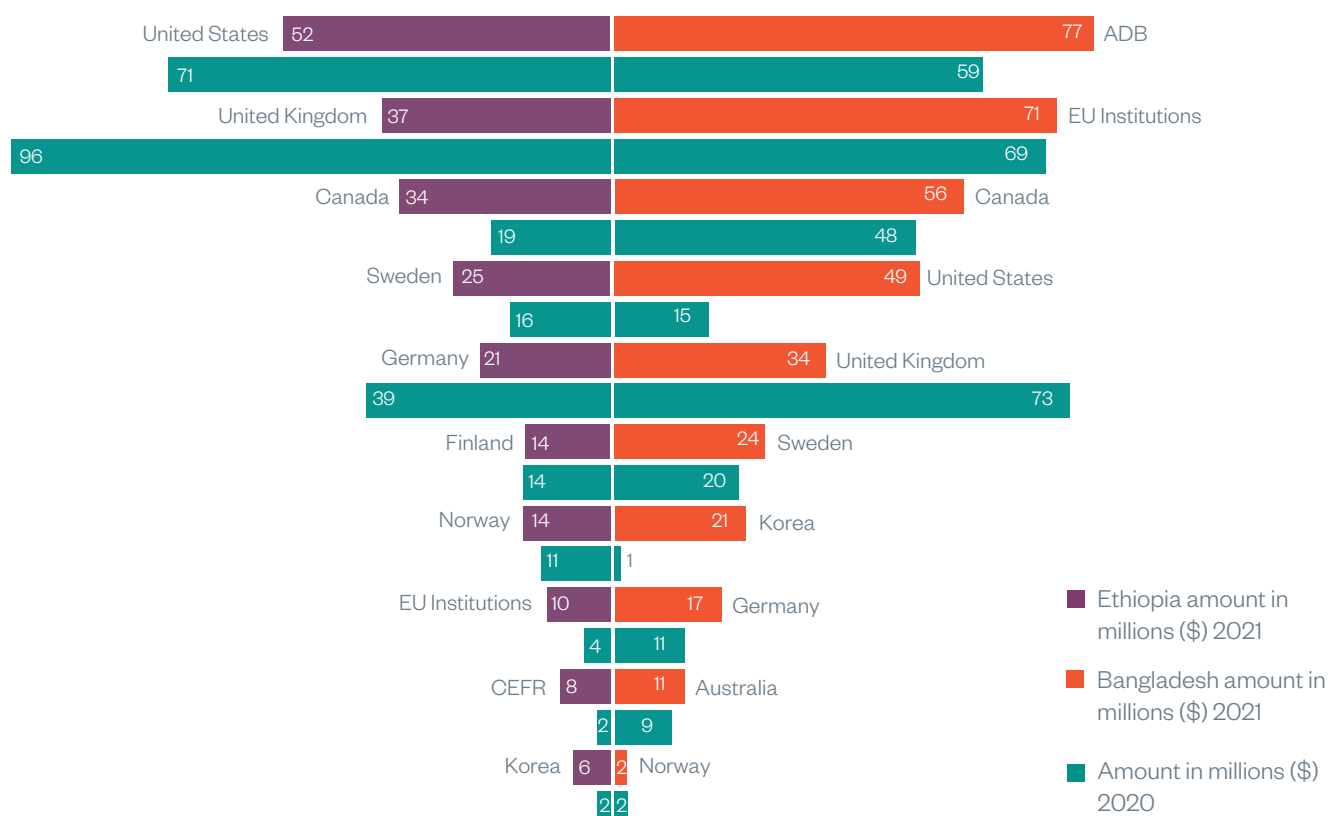


Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 11: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, Ethiopia, 2016-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 12: Amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by donor, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, 2021 (\$ millions)**

Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Table 3: Amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA by donor, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, 2020-2021**

Ethiopia				Bangladesh			
Donor	Amount in millions (\$) 2021	Amount in millions (\$) 2020	Percentage change	Donor	Amount in millions (\$) 2021	Amount in millions (\$) 2020	Percentage change
United States	52	71	-26%	Asian Development Bank	77	59	32%
United Kingdom	37	96	-62%	EU Institutions	71	69	4%
Canada	34	19	76%	Canada	56	48	16%
Sweden	25	16	58%	United States	49	15	221%
Germany	21	39	-45%	United Kingdom	34	73	-54%
Finland	14	14	6%	Sweden	24	20	17%
Norway	14	11	25%	Korea	21	0.7	2863%
EU Institutions	10	4.1	141%	Germany	17	11	55%
Central Emergency Response Fund	7.8	2.2	254%	Australia	11	9.3	13%
Korea	5.6	1.7	223%	Norway	1.9	1.7	11%
Italy	5.5	5.1	8%	France	1.9	1.5	32%
UNICEF	5.1	1.4	262%	Hungary	1.5	0.9	62%
Ireland	4.6	3.6	28%	Switzerland	1.4	0.8	73%
Japan	3.7	0.0	0%	Japan	1.0	2.6	-62%
France	3.2	1.0	220%	UNICEF	1.0	1.4	-29%

\* Purple shows negative percentage changes, light orange shows positive percentage changes under 20% and green shows positive percentage changes over 20%

Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

## Breakdown by sector and channel of delivery

In terms of the sectors that received gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, the top four sectors remained the same for both Bangladesh and Ethiopia. For Bangladesh the percentages in 2021 followed a pattern similar to that seen in 2020, with education accounting for the largest share (50%), followed by health and wellbeing (15%), poverty alleviation (15%) and gender equality (10%) (see Table 4). The amount of funding for poverty alleviation increased from \$23 million to \$54 million, while funding for climate action increased from \$6.7 million to \$12 million. However, funding for conflict, peace and security decreased from \$5.1 million to \$2.0 million.

For Ethiopia, the top four sectors were the same as in 2020: education (29%) followed by poverty alleviation (29%), food assistance (14%) and health and wellbeing (10%) (see Table 4). However, health and wellbeing saw a 55% decrease in the amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021, compared to 2020. Population policies, programmes and reproductive health all saw significant falls, from \$35 million in 2020 to \$18 million in 2021. This was the result, in large part, of UK funding cuts that led to a decrease in funding from \$25 million in 2020

to just \$1.4 million in 2021 for this sector. Funding for basic health also experienced a large decrease, from \$19 million in 2020 to \$5.7 million in 2021 (again, mainly the result of a reduction of \$15 million from the UK).

Development food assistance – supported only by the US in both 2020 and 2021 – fell from \$50 million to \$37 million. Previously neglected sectors, such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and climate action, saw large increases, with funding for WASH rising from \$3.02 million to \$6.8 million and for climate change rising from \$1.4 million to \$3.9 million.

In line with the patterns seen in 2020, the majority of ODA for both Bangladesh and Ethiopia was channelled through UN organisations. In Bangladesh, a significant share of the gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2020 went through local NGOs (largely because of funding to BRAC, the leading and long-established national NGO). In 2021, however, there was decrease of 18% in the amount going to developing country-based NGOs, mainly as a result of the reduction in investments to BRAC, particularly from the UK (see Table 6). While Ethiopia saw a large increase in the amount of ODA received by domestic NGOs, but because the initial amount in 2020 was very small, the total amount remains low.



A 12-year-old girl who suffer from cerebral palay, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

**Table 4: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, Bangladesh**

Sustainable Development Goal	Sector	Amount millions (\$)	Amount total 2021 in millions (\$)	% of total	Amount total 2020 in millions (\$)	% change
SDG 4 Quality education	Basic education	4.91	185.33	49.75%	166.00	11.64%
	Post-secondary education	7.16				
	Secondary education	165.50				
	Education, level unspecified	7.76				
SDG 3 Good health	Population policies/ programmes & reproductive health	31.89	57.03	15.31%	44.50	28.15%
	Basic health	22.41				
	Health, general	2.66				
	Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)	0.07				
SDG 1 No poverty	Emergency response	49.99	54.09	14.52%	23.10	134.16%
	Other social infrastructure & services	4.10				
SDG 5 Gender equality	Government & civil society –general	38.19	38.19	10.25%	35.60	3.01%
SDG 13 Climate action	General environment protection	10.67	11.56	3.10%	6.66	73.59%
	Reconstruction relief & rehabilitation	0.89				
SDG 15 Life on land	Agriculture	5.59	5.59	1.50%	7.18	-22.08%
SDG 2 Zero hunger	Development food assistance	4.05	4.05	1.09%	2.90	39.73%
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation	Water supply & sanitation	3.73	3.73	1.00%	0.40	832.52%
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Conflict, peace & security	1.97	1.97	0.53%	5.13	-61.58%
SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Business & other services	0.87	1.29	0.35%	0.24	437.89%
	Communications	0.17				
	Industry	0.25				
SDG 7 Clean and affordable energy	Energy generation, renewable sources		0.01	0.00%	1.95	-99.23%
	Energy policy	0.01				
SDG 14 Life below water	Fishing				0.07	-100.00%
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	Trade policies & regulations	0.47	0.47	0.13%	0.00	

(Devonald et al., 2023)



**Table 5: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by sector and SDG, Ethiopia**

Sustainable Development Goal	Sector	Amount millions (\$)	Amount total 2021 in millions (\$)	% of total	Amount total 2020 in millions (\$)	% change
SDG 4 Quality education	Basic education	33.01	74.55	29.19%	81.60	-8.64%
	Post-secondary education	8.61				
	Secondary education	28.17				
	Education, level unspecified	4.76				
SDG 1 No poverty	Emergency response	59.13	73.50	28.78%	68.20	7.77%
	Other social infrastructure & services	14.37				
SDG 2 Zero hunger	Development food assistance	37.33	37.33	14.62%	50.20	-25.64%
SDG 3 Good health	Population policies/ programmes & reproductive health	17.70	26.77	10.48%	59.40	-54.93%
	Basic health	5.72				
	Health, general	3.35				
SDG 5 Gender equality	Government & civil society –general	20.26	20.26	7.93%	20.20	0.28%
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation	Water supply & sanitation	6.79	6.79	2.66%	3.02	124.99%
SDG 13 Climate action	General environment protection	2.23	3.87	1.52%	1.41	174.59%
	Reconstruction relief & Rehabilitation	1.64				
SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Business & other services	2.41	2.79	1.09%	3.61	-22.74%
	Communications	0.27				
	Industry	0.11				
SDG 15 Life on land	Agriculture	2.19	2.40	0.94%	4.51	-46.69%
	Forestry	0.22				
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Conflict, peace & security	1.83	1.83	0.72%	0.37	395.19%
SDG 7 Clean and affordable energy	Energy policy	0.17	0.17	0.07%	0.01	1636.16%
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	Trade policies & regulations	0.02	0.08	0.03%	0.00	0.00%
	Tourism	0.04				
	Banking & Financial Services	0.02				

(Devonald et al., 2023)

**Table 6: Overview of the amount and percentage of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA by channel of delivery, Bangladesh and Ethiopia**

Ethiopia				Bangladesh			
Channel of delivery	Amount in millions (\$) 2021	Amount in millions (\$) 2020	Percentage change	Channel of delivery	Amount in millions (\$) 2021	Amount in millions (\$) 2020	Percentage change
UN agency	91	96	-5.0%	UN agency	108	76	43%
Donor country-based NGO	62	50	24%	Recipient government	96	59	62%
International NGO	23	36	-37%	Central government	53	55	-2.7%
Central government	22	36	-41%	Developing country-based NGO	35	65	-18%
Private sector	14	19	-25%	Donor country-based NGO	29	25	17%
Multilateral	11	1.8	524%	International NGO	11	9.6	17%
Public sector	11	9.0	20%	Public sector	11	6.1	73%
University, college, research institute or think-tank	7.4	0	-	Private sector	8.5	7.1	20%
Local government	7.1	0	-	University, college, research institute or think-tank	7.2	7.0	2.6%
Other	4.6	12	-61%	Multilateral	6.8	5.2	30%
Donor government	1.6	1.1	43%	Other	3.6	3.8	-4.5%
Developing country-based NGO	1.3	0.8	69%	Third-country government (delegated co-operation)	2.1	1.5	34%
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)	0.1	0	-	Donor government	0.7	0.7	-0.3%

Source: (Devonald et al., 2023)



## Gender and intersectionality

In line with patterns at the global level, both Bangladesh and Ethiopia saw an increase in the amount of ODA going to young people with disabilities in 2021. In Bangladesh, the amount increased from \$2 million to \$24 million, a very large rise compared to previous years (see Figure 13). Much of this went to health (particularly SRH) and to education programming. This accounted for around 6.4% of the total gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021 (compared to 0.6% in 2020) (see Figure 15). The majority of this ODA came from Canada (\$17 million), followed by EU institutions (\$6 million).

In Ethiopia, the amount of ODA going to young people with disabilities still lags behind the levels seen in 2018 and 2019 (see Figure 14). However, it increased from \$7.96 million in 2020 to \$14.5 million in 2021, accounting for around 5.7% of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA (up from 2.3% in 2020) (see Figure 15). Finland provided the largest amount of ODA targeted towards young people with disabilities (\$7.3million), mainly for education (such as the General Education Quality Improvement Programme). Finland was followed by the UK (\$3.6million) and then Norway (\$2.87 million).

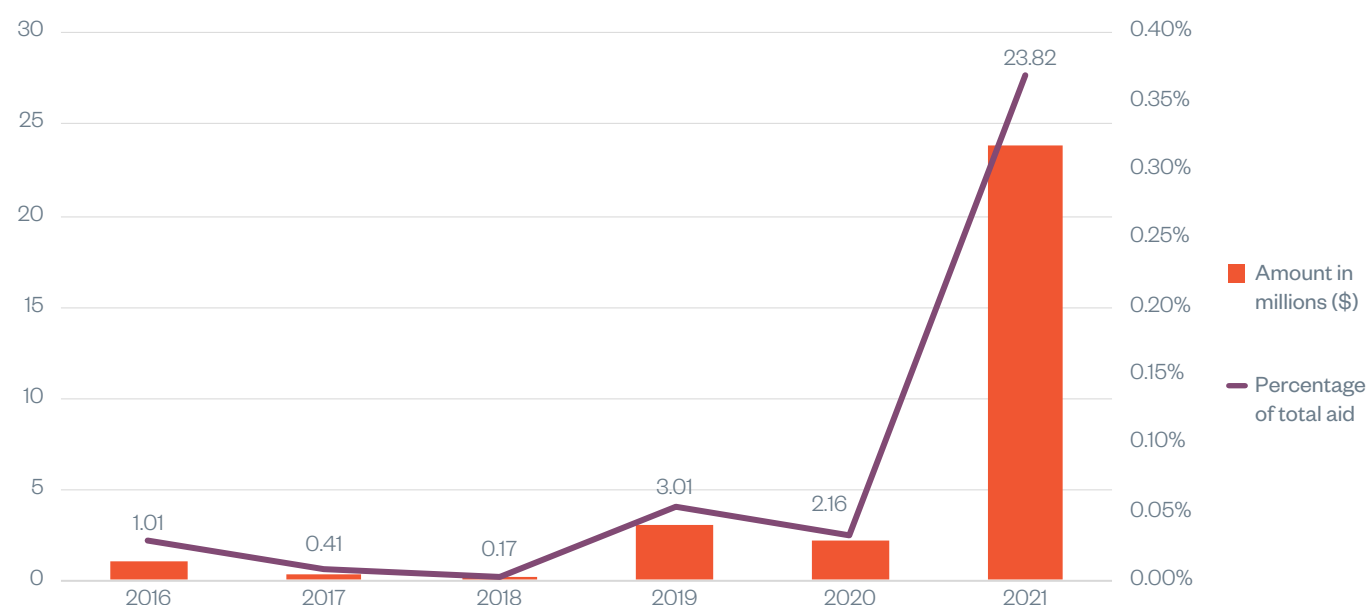
We found that the amount of ODA going to programming to prevent or respond to child marriage had increased, overall, between 2016 and 2021 for both Bangladesh and Ethiopia. In Bangladesh, this investment still only accounts for 6.4% of the gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA, highlighting the need for higher investments (see

Figure 16). However, the amount going to child marriage programming reached its highest level for six years (\$24 million in 2021), up from \$16 million in 2020 (see Figure 17). Levels of investments in 2021 have reached similar levels to 2019, which suggests that the lower levels in 2020 were a temporary reduction in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Ethiopia, child marriage investments increased from \$6.9 million in 2020 to \$8.8 million in 2021. Yet, these investments remain very low, considering the high burden of child marriage in Ethiopia (see Figure 18). They accounted for only 3.5% of the total gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021. The increases in ODA for child marriage programming came mainly from Canada (\$2 million), Ireland (\$2 million), Norway (\$1.5 million) and UNICEF (\$1.5 million). In Bangladesh, the vast majority of ODA for child marriage programming came from Canada (\$21 million) and Norway (\$1 million).

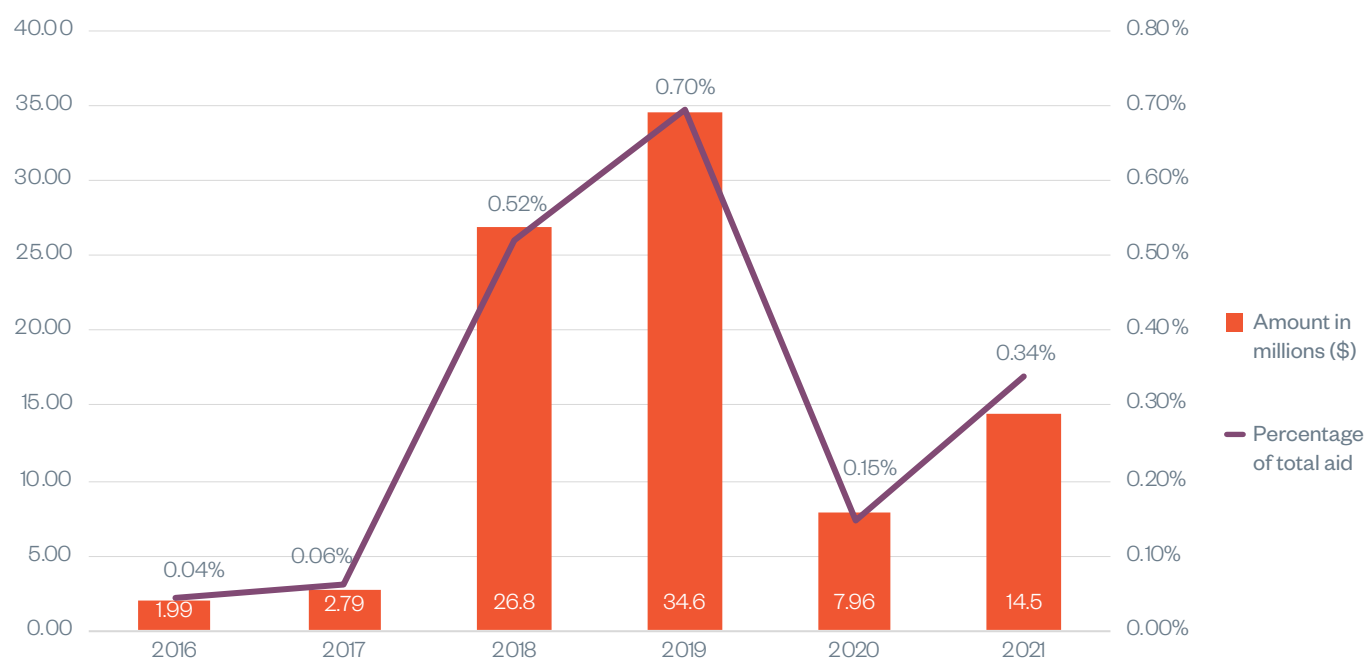
We also reviewed the amount of gender-and adolescent-targeted ODA that included refugee adolescents as a target population. Both Bangladesh and Ethiopia have high numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. We found that the amount of ODA targeted towards young Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh had increased from \$46 million in 2020 to \$57 million in 2021 and that the percentage had increased slightly from 14% to 16% (see Figure 19). The majority of this investment came from the US (\$27 million provided to IOM for a range of activities, including child protection and GBV mitigation), followed by Germany (\$13 million) and Canada (\$11 million).

**Figure 13: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, Bangladesh, 2016–2021**



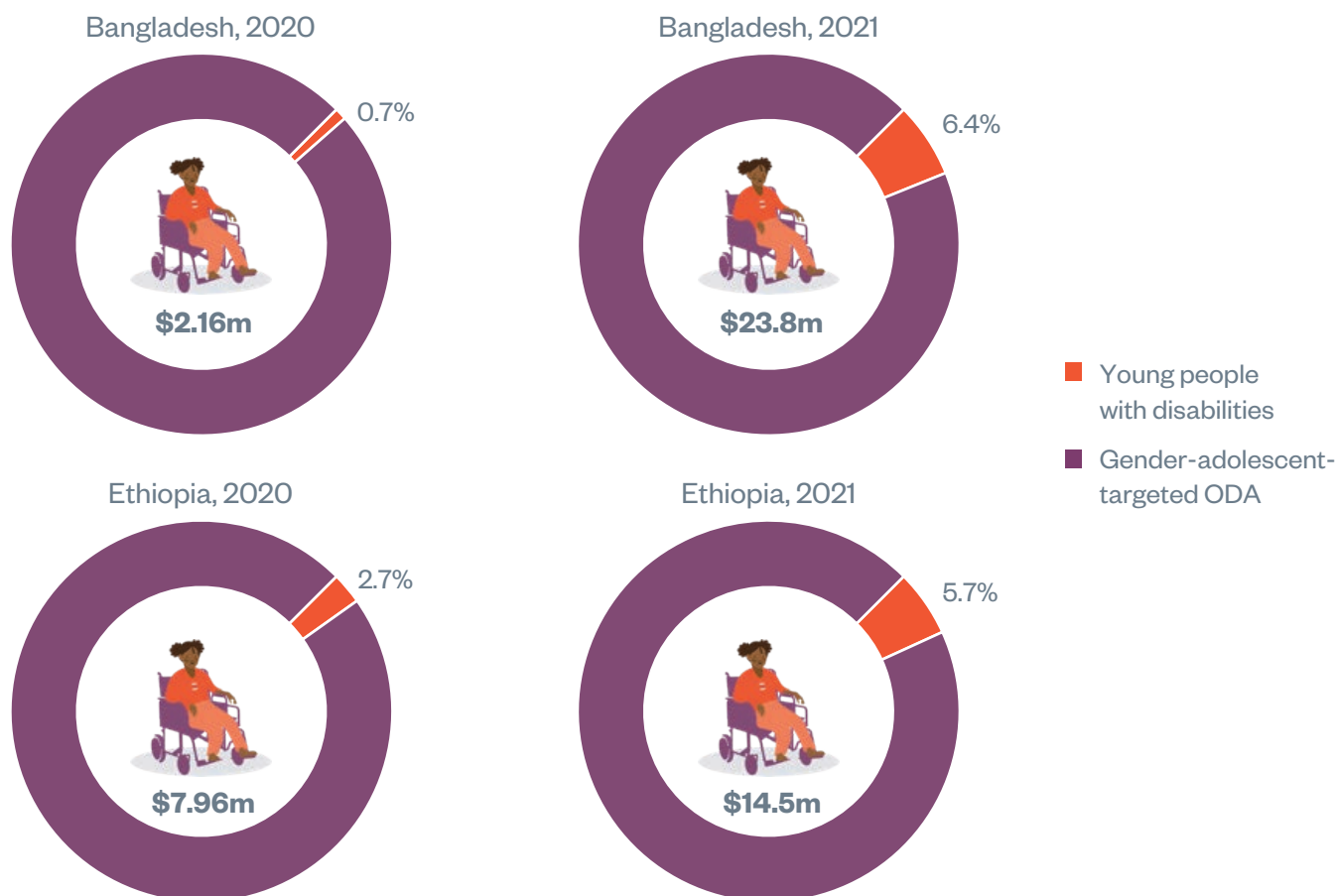
Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

**Figure 14: Gender- age- and disability-related ODA, Ethiopia, 2016–2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

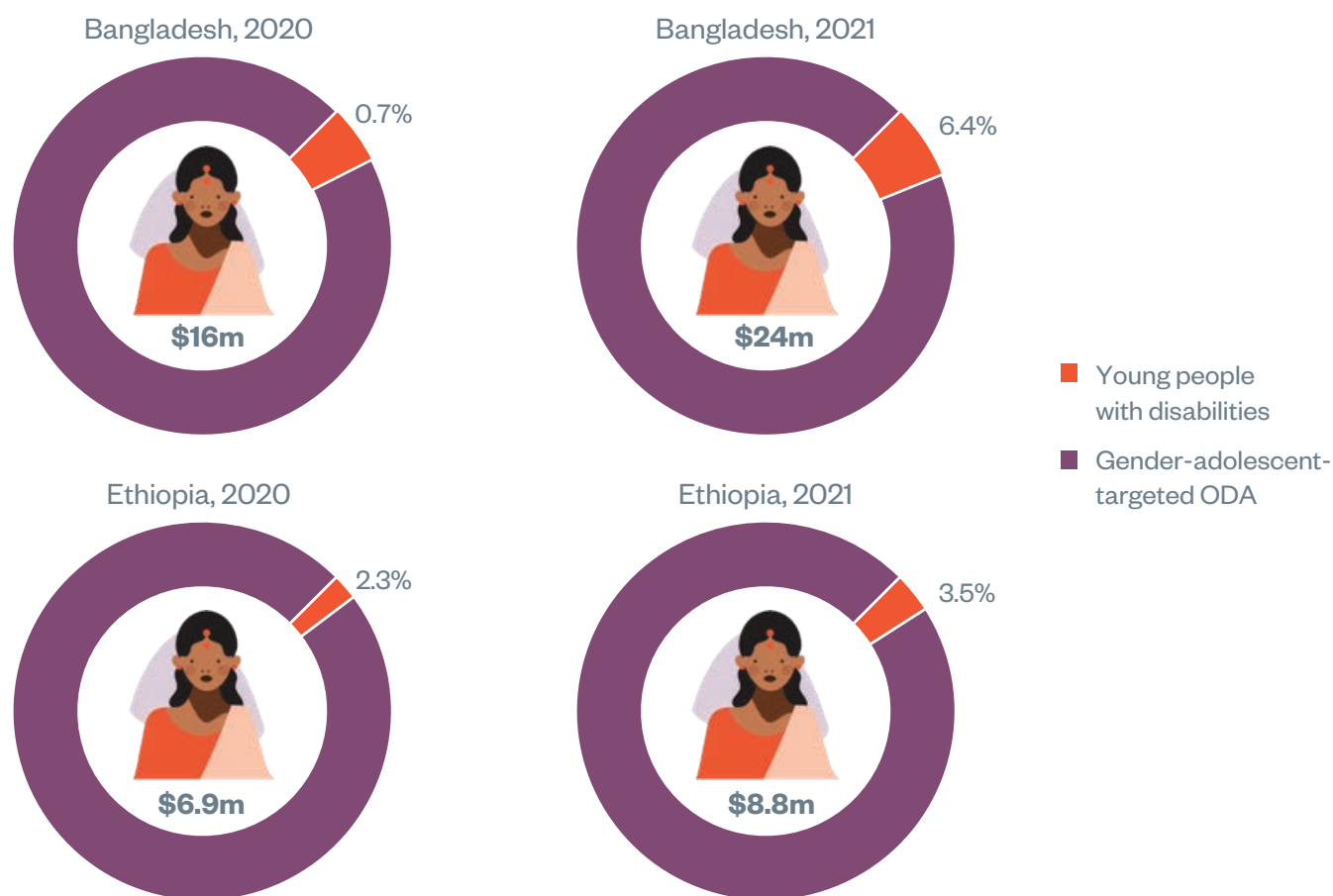
**Figure 15: Percentage and amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA targeting young people with disabilities, Bangladesh and Ethiopia 2020-2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



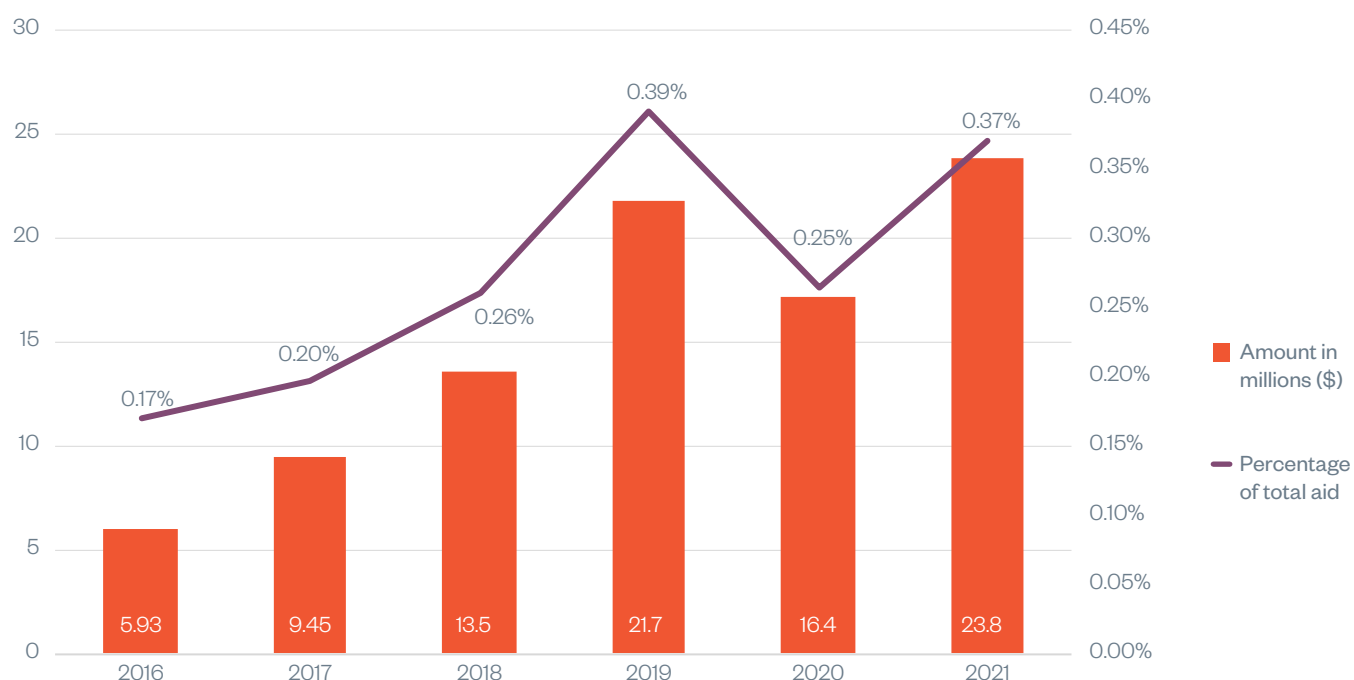
Figure 16: Percentage and amount of child marriage-targeted ODA, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2020-2021



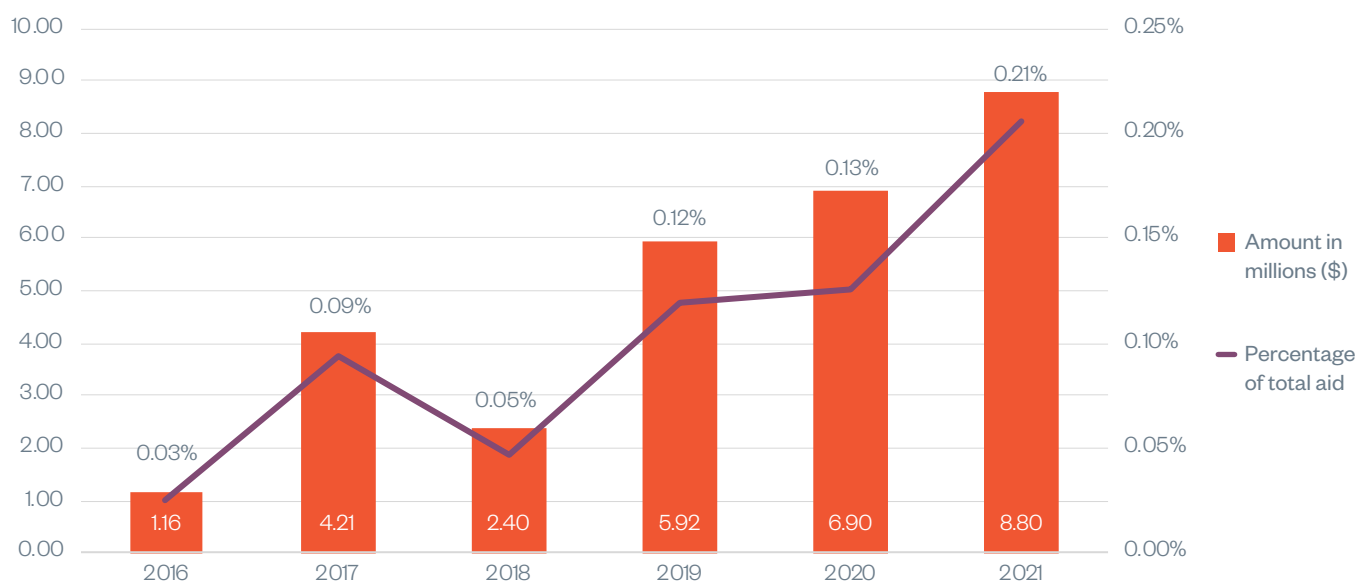
Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



Adolescent girls participating in a Youth centre, Ethiopia © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

**Figure 17: ODA targeted to child marriage programming, Bangladesh, 2016–2021**


Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

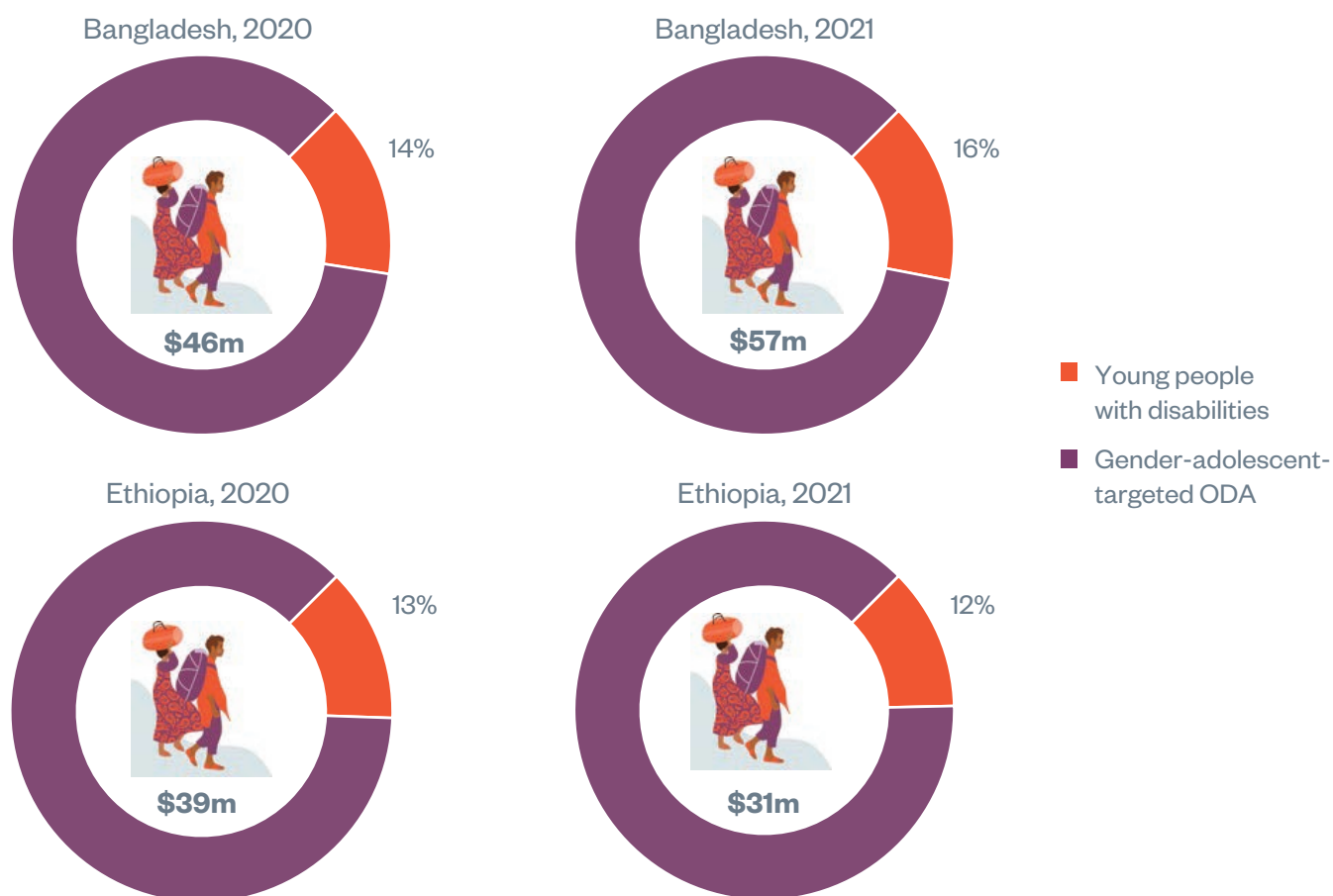
**Figure 18: ODA targeted to child marriage programming, Ethiopia, 2016–2021**


Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)

In Ethiopia, there was a slight decrease in the amount of ODA going to young refugees, which fell from \$39 million in 2020 to \$31 million in 2021 – part of an overall downward trend since 2019. The percentage of investments targeting

young refugees as a share of the total gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA also decreased slightly, falling from 13% in 2020 to 12% in 2021 (see Figure 19 and 20).

Figure 19: Percentage and amount of young refugee-targeted ODA, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2020-2021



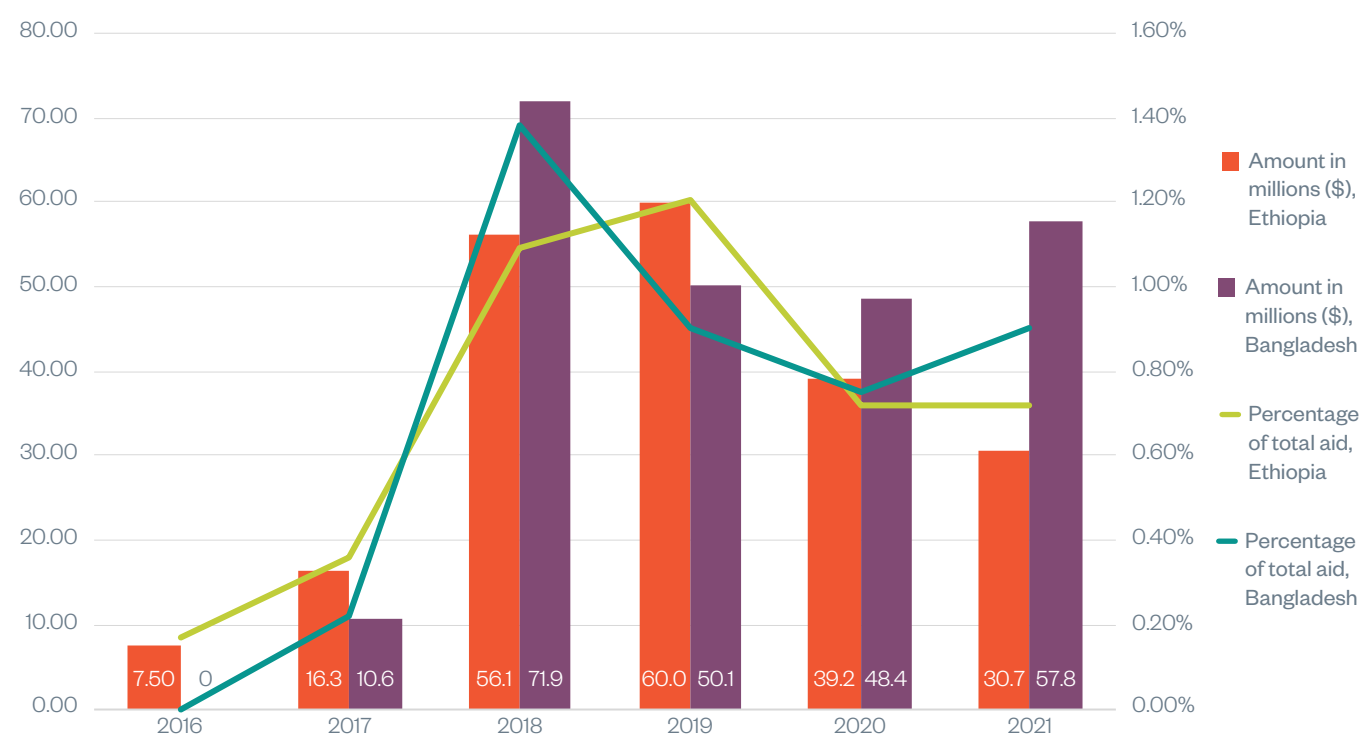
Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



Girls in a Youth centre, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023



**Figure 20: Gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA to refugees in Ethiopia and Bangladesh, 2016–2021**



Source: (Authors analysis, 2023)



An 18-year-old girl preparing traditional embroidery for sale, Amhara, Ethiopia. © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

# Conclusion

Our analysis underscores that post-pandemic investments are not reaching adolescent girls. Although there was a slight improvement in the absolute amount of gender- and adolescent-targeted ODA in 2021, there were no improvements percentage-wise – and, in fact, there was a slight decrease from 5.6% to 5.5%. Mirroring our analysis of the funding landscape from 2016-2020, there remains a significant disconnect between the large adolescent and youth populations in many LMICs (ranging from 25% to 30%) and the percentage of ODA invested in supporting the (5.5%). This reinforces the urgency of increasing both advocacy and evidence on the importance of funding programming that targets adolescent girls.

On a more positive note, there have been some improvements, particularly within disability-focused ODA, which has increased significantly (albeit from a very low starting point in 2020), as well as within once

neglected sectors such as economic empowerment and skills-building, and WASH. However, investments in programming on child marriage and climate change that are responsive to gender and to the needs of adolescents have not improved and remain very under-funded. Moreover, in line with the findings from 2020, the available data on adolescent investments still lack transparency and consistency.

The introduction of an age-related marker in OECD-CRS reporting would facilitate analysis of trends in funding for adolescent programming and the ability of the international community to track progress in line with the commitments in the Sustainable Development Agenda to reducing gender inequalities and supporting young people, especially the most marginalised. Such a marker would also help to ensure that all donors provide complete, consistent, and comparable reporting on adolescent investments.



12-year-old Rohingya girls fetching water, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023



# References

- Arutyunova, A., Babchek, A., Battistini, E., et al. (2022) *Resourcing Adolescent Girls to Thrive: A report exploring where is the money for adolescent girls' rights using an ecosystem approach* ([www.resourcinggirls.org/](http://www.resourcinggirls.org/)).
- Dhaka Tribune (2023) 'Bangladesh, S Korea sign \$3bn EDCF deal for development', 4 May 2023 ([www.dhakatribune.com/foreign-affairs/2023/05/04/bangladesh-korea-sign-3b-edcf-deal-for-development-mrt-line-4](http://www.dhakatribune.com/foreign-affairs/2023/05/04/bangladesh-korea-sign-3b-edcf-deal-for-development-mrt-line-4)).
- Devonald, M., Guglielmi, S. and Jones, N. (2023) *Investing in adolescent girls: mapping global and national funding patterns from 2016 – 2020*. Report. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence ([www.gage.odg.org/publication/investing-in-adolescent-girls-mapping-global-and-national-funding-patterns-from-2016-2020/](http://www.gage.odg.org/publication/investing-in-adolescent-girls-mapping-global-and-national-funding-patterns-from-2016-2020/)).
- Donor Tracker (2019) 'At a glance. Funding trends'. Berlin: Donor Tracker ([https://donortracker.org/sector/gender-equality#:~:text=Top%20donors,Japan%20\(US\\$244.2%20billion\)](https://donortracker.org/sector/gender-equality#:~:text=Top%20donors,Japan%20(US$244.2%20billion))).
- European Commission (2020) 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025'. Brussels: European Commission (<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>).
- GENDERNET (2016) *Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker*. Paris: OECD-DAC network on gender equality ([www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf)).
- Global Affairs Canada (2017) *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*. #HerVoiceHerChoice. Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada ([www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/NAPS-Website/6.Policy/2017-Feminist-International-Assistance-Policy-Canada-2017.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/NAPS-Website/6.Policy/2017-Feminist-International-Assistance-Policy-Canada-2017.pdf)).
- Guglielmi, S., Neumeister, E., Jones, N., et al. (2022) 'Capturing adolescent realities in the global data revolution.' *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*. ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(22\)00222-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(22)00222-X)).
- Loft, P. and Brien, P. (2022) 'Reducing the UK's aid spend in 2021 and 2022', research briefing. London: House of Commons Library (<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/>).
- Marcus, R. and Harper, C. (2015) 'Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: A brief guide'. London: ODI (<https://odi.org/en/publications/social-norms-gender-norms-and-adolescent-girls-a-brief-guide/>).
- Marsh, M. and Blake, M. (2019) *Where's the money? how the humanitarian system is failing in its commitments to end violence against women and girls*. New York: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and VOICE. (<https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3854/whereisthemoney-finalfinal.pdf>).
- Patton, G.C., Olsson, C.A., Skirbekk, V., et al. (2018) 'Adolescence and the next generation', *Nature* 554: 458–466.
- Sheehan, P., Sweeny, K., Rasmussen, B., et al., (2017) 'Building the foundations for sustainable development: a case for global investment in the capabilities of adolescents.' *Lancet*, 390(10104); DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(17)30872-3.
- Taylor, R. (2022) 'UK aid spending: Statistics and recent developments', In Focus. London: House of Lords Library (<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-aid-spending-statistics-and-recent-developments/>).
- UNFPA (2022) 'World Population Dashboard.' New York: United Nations Population Fund ([www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard](http://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard)).
- UNICEF (2017) *The adolescent brain: a second window of opportunity. A compendium*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti ([www.unicefirc.org/publications/pdf/adolescent\\_brain\\_a\\_second\\_window\\_of\\_opportunity\\_a\\_compendium.pdf](http://www.unicefirc.org/publications/pdf/adolescent_brain_a_second_window_of_opportunity_a_compendium.pdf)).
- Watson, C. (2015) 'Understanding changing social norms and practices around girls' education and marriage: Lessons learned and emerging issues from year 2 of a multi-country field study'. London: ODI (<https://odn.odg.org/media/documents/9572.pdf>).





#### **GAGE Programme Office**

Overseas Development Institute  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom  
Email: [gage@odi.org.uk](mailto:gage@odi.org.uk)  
Web: [www.gage.odi.org](http://www.gage.odi.org)

ISBN: 978-1-915783-11-0

## **About GAGE**

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

## **Disclaimer**

This document is an output of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme which is funded by UK aid from the UK government. However, views expressed and information contained within do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies and are not endorsed by the UK government, which accepts no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

## **Copyright**

Readers are encouraged to quote and reproduce material from this report for their own non-commercial publications (any commercial use must be cleared with the GAGE Programme Office first by contacting [gage@odi.org.uk](mailto:gage@odi.org.uk)). As copyright holder, GAGE requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the GAGE website, [www.gage.odi.org](http://www.gage.odi.org)

© GAGE 2022 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Front cover: A group of adolescent girls participating in a Girls club in Oromia, Ethiopia © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023

