

## Investing in Generation Now

Today at the Spring Meetings, a panel of ministers, Bank leaders and advocates, including Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, discussed how investing in adolescents is key to improving the future of developing countries. Ninety percent of today's 1.2 billion adolescents worldwide live in the developing world.

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim emphasized the urgency of investing in adolescents now, especially girls. Frustrated aspirations in youth can lead to extremism and migration, he said, and countries won't be able to compete in the global economy if they don't invest. Innovative investment tools, such as the Global Financing Facility (GFF), can help countries leverage more financing to serve this important group.

Getting more and better data on adolescents—especially girls—is critical for making these investments, Gates said. Investments in family planning and nutrition, for example, will produce more jobs, as the adolescents of today become the job creators of tomorrow. It's also important to hear directly from communities about what they need, she stressed.

Canada's Minister of International Development Marie-Claude Bibeau said women and girls are at the heart of policies in Canada which emphasize human dignity. Empowering adolescent girls will make a big difference, she said.

In Rwanda, the government takes a comprehensive view on youth, Claver Gatete, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning said, including early childhood investments and focusing on beliefs and behavior change.

Saba Ismail, founder of Aware Girls, Pakistan, said educating girls is paramount, and cited some of the obstacles that girls in her country face going to school, including parents prohibiting girls from school because of safety concerns or school fees.

Mozambique has prioritized investments in adolescents and is working with the GFF, Minister of Health Nazira Abdula said. The country offers services to adolescents in schools in the poorest provinces. Investing in adolescents makes a huge difference both at the family and country level, and towards reducing poverty, she said.

World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva said disarming adolescents in conflict areas must also be considered as part of the broader approach to investing in adolescents. She concluded by urging older generations to take action now and find solutions that will work for tomorrow, not just today.