Building the A3 Policy Checklist

> 56 POLICIES, 113 COUNTRIES, 1 CHECKLIST

The Adolescent Atlas for Action (A3) is a suite of tools that summarizes the lives and needs of adolescents around the world to promote evidence-based decision-making. Through accessible and easy-to-grasp data just one click away, the A3 bridges the gap between decisionmakers and evidence to inform policies and programs.

The A3 Policy Checklist, created by the Population Council's GIRL Center, features a curated list of national policies relevant to the lives of adolescents under 9 thematic domains, and whether countries have enacted each policy. The checklist presents a snapshot of commitments made to achieving adolescent wellbeing through adolescent-focused policies.

As of July 2022, the policy checklist includes 56 policies, which were tracked for 113 low- and middle- income countries (LMICs). This list of policies is not exhaustive, and additional policies will be added to the checklist every year.

This brief elaborates on the methodology for curating the A3 Policy Checklist.

DEVELOPING THE POLICY CHECKLIST

Landscape analysis

In consultation with key stakeholders, we conducted a landscape analysis of adolescent-focused data and resources. This was done through searching publicly available databases that aggregate similar information at the country-level, though we focused on indicators pertaining to adolescents (age 11 through 24). We identified 9 key adolescent-focused themes to explore in the A3, and we refer to these as thematic "domains." All policies were categorized under at least one domain, and several were categorized under more than one.

There are currently 9 domains listed in the A3 policy checklist, including:

- Climate, Environment, and Infrastructure
- General Health and Nutrition
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Education
- Economics, Employment, and Poverty
- Gender Norms and Agency
- Exposure to Media
- Harmful Practices
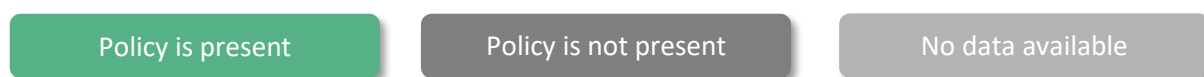- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Research and selection

We searched 14 databases[1] to track adolescent-focused policies under the 9 thematic domains for 113 LMICs. If the database did not contain data for one of these countries from 2010 or later, we searched external sources to confirm whether a national policy was in place. These include governments documents and official reports.

The 56 policies were selected according to three criteria:

- The policy is relevant to one or more of the 9 domains identified as relevant to adolescent lives,
- The policy is somewhat standard across many countries, and
- Information about whether a country had enacted the policy was available through other online databases, government documents, or official reports.

Categorizing Policy Status

Policies were categorized in one of three ways to reflect the status of a policy in each country:

Policy is present	Policy is not present	No data available

A policy was marked as present if there was a database or other official document that confirmed the policy was enacted in that country. A policy was marked as not present if there was a database or external source that explicitly noted that the policy was either not enacted or not recorded in the country. A policy was marked "no data available" if the policy was searched in a database and an external source but could not be confirmed as officially present in a country.

Filling in the gaps: What we do (not) know about adolescents and climate, media, mental health, and general health & nutrition

The A3 Policy Checklist is a tool for stakeholders to identify where policies are present and where the gaps remain. In addition to exploring status of various adolescent-focused policies, a closer look at domains where policies are lacking is valuable to inform future action.

Notably, while there are 32 adolescent-focused policies under the "Gender Norms and Agency" domain, there are not yet any policies in the "Climate, Environment and Infrastructure," "Exposure to Media," and "General Health and Nutrition" domains. While we conducted a broad Internet search of adolescent-focused policies directly related to these three domains, the findings were limited to general indicators and guidance for policy formation.

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[1] Databases include: Center for Reproductive Rights; World Health Organization's Global Abortion Policies Database; End Corporal Punishment; Tobacco Control Laws; The World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law database; World Policy Center; UNESCO Education Rights; World Health Organization's Global Health repository data; Human Rights Watch, LGBT Rights; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA); Human Dignity Trust; UNICEF WinS4Girls
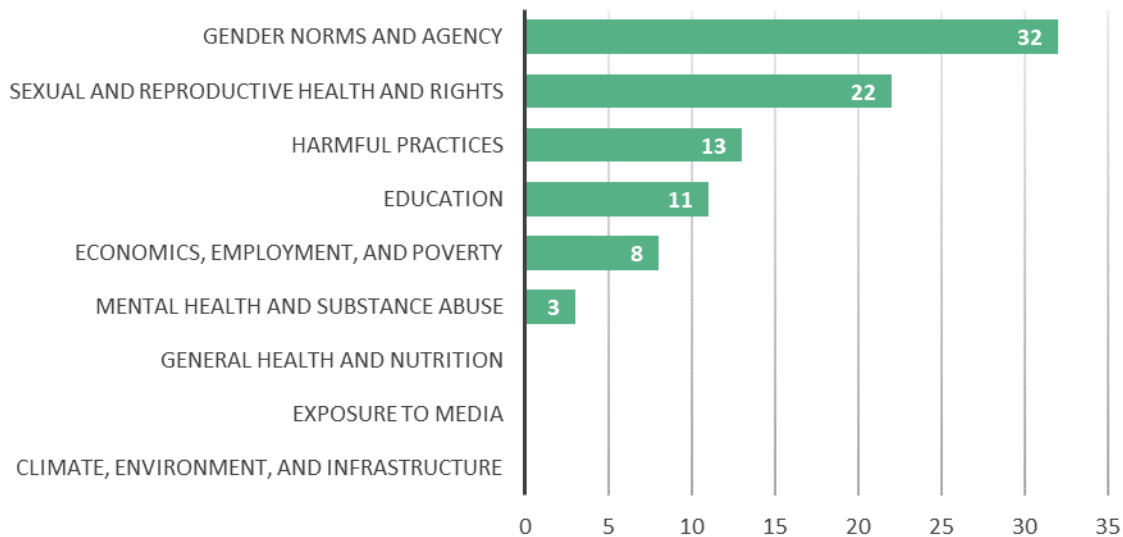
Figure 1 Policy count per domain

For "Exposure to Media," we searched UNICEF's PolicyLab Guide on Digital Connectivity, which made recommendations of indicators for how government policies might form around adolescents' exposure to media. The guide recommends that policies should support adolescents' online access (including access to non-English materials), opportunities to build relevant competencies and skills, privacy and identity, and protection (from harmful content, online sexual abuse or exploitation, cyberbullying and excessive screen-time). However, after searching for adolescent-focused keywords, there were no databases or key documents that aggregated and recorded the presence of relevant national policies across multiple countries.

For "General Health and Nutrition," we searched the WHO's Global Database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) to gain ideas about country-level policies supporting nutrition. While the database offered a broad overview of policies, these documents came in different forms such as strategic plans, development plans, or legislative integrations, denoting aspirational rather than official policies. Additionally, some of this documentation was at the country-level while others were labeled as "non-national." As such, documents articulating policies at the non-national level were not comprehensive of the national policy landscape. Moreover, only 19 of 2,915 documented policies specifically addressed adolescents, with many of these policies implemented in the same country, and many of which were high income countries.

For "Climate, Environment, and Infrastructure," we searched The Climate Policy Database by NewClimate Institute but did not find adolescent-focused policies. The general lack of adolescent-focused sources may be because the relationship between adolescents and climate is often understood through indicators such as safety, nutrition, and school attendance. Such policy indicators are included in the A3 but are not disaggregated in the A3 in ways that are informative about the experiences of adolescents in relation to climate change and crisis.

Finally, we note that the "Mental Health and Substance Abuse" domain is less populated, with only three policies, all of which address substance abuse. This points to an opportunity and need to

identify policy indicators and resources that specifically address adolescents' mental health beyond substance abuse.

Following the Data, Growing the Checklist

We emphasize that this current list of 56 policies is not an exhaustive one. We plan to continue building the A3 Policy Checklist by adding more policies, particularly policies that link to unpopulated domains: "Media and Exposure"; "General Health and Nutrition"; and "Climate, Environment, and Infrastructure." We also emphasize the importance of addressing adolescents' mental health and seek to add relevant policies.

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