

International Youth Day: Mind your own business!

AUGUST 2019 // Australian not-for-profit, [One Girl](#) has today released a report which reveals the incredible impact their Business Brains program has been having for young women and girls in Sierra Leone.

When Aminata was a child, she became a mother and a wife. At 14 she was married to an older man and soon became pregnant, forcing her to drop out of school. After the birth of a second, she grieved, wondering what opportunities she was going to be able to provide for her daughters.

After becoming a member of One Girl's Business Brains program, Aminata learned about sexual and reproductive health, and how she could choose whether or not she wanted to become pregnant again. She learned about small businesses and how she could start one to earn an income and gain greater financial independence. She learned about her rights and the fact that child marriage was illegal. She learned that she had a choice in what she could do with her life.

This report is a radical participatory evaluation of how the program has been running since its inception in 2012 and is exemplary in its development approach. Through group discussions and one-on-one interviews, they found where the program stood. Spoiler alert: the results are amazing.

- 1. Sexual rights and personal freedoms are being embraced.**
- 2. Future pathways are opening up.**
- 3. Girls are paying it forward and communities are feeling the change.**
- 4. Girls are now becoming confident leaders.**

What began as a way for girls to earn money outside of school hours has evolved into a program that clears the pathway for women like Aminata to start living a life she chooses. Business Brains recognises that while education is fundamental, only by addressing the root causes that prevent girls from staying in school or succeeding in the real world, will we see an end to worldwide gender inequality.

"The businesses have made some of us become financially independent and not to rely on our parents and boyfriends for survival and support. This helped free ourselves from teenage/early pregnancy and sexual abuse by our boyfriends."

– Business Brains participant

The report has been shared and reviewed by external parties and includes comments from **Zoe Condliffe, CEO and Founder of She's A Crowd; Julie McDonald, CEO of The Funding Network Australia; Shani Cain, CEO of Oaktree and Madeleine Grummet, CoFounder and CEO of GirledWorld.**

"Economic empowerment is so important for women and it's so good to see that by achieving financial independence through Business Brains, women are becoming less vulnerable to unwanted pregnancy and sexual abuse. While we aspire to a world where women don't fear sexual assault and child pregnancy at all, it is heartening to see that women can avoid such outcomes for themselves to an extent by becoming financially empowered through business. This is a great start."

– Zoe Condliffe, CEO and Founder of *She's a Crowd*.

For more info or to set up an interview time with [One Girl CEO, Sarah Ireland](#), please contact One Girl's Communications Director, Meabh Friel at mf@onegirl.org.au or 0424 714 608.