

EMPOWERING GIRLS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE



SUPPORTING GIRLS TO
RISE OUT OF POVERTY

January 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Amanda Cary and edited by Mia Lipsit.

AJWS wishes to thank the many adolescent girls and young women leaders in India who shared their experiences with us, as well as the following individuals for their contributions to this paper: the inspiring leaders of Girls Rise India; Hasina Khan and Yasmin Adam of Awaaz-e-Niswaan; Jameela Nishat of Shaheen Resource Center for Women; Dr. Wasundhara Joshi, Priya Agrawal and Dr. Nayreen Daruwalla of the Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA); and Jashodhara Dasgupta and Palasri R. Das of SAHAYOG. We want to acknowledge Shumona Goel, Sunita Sharma, Sandhya Gupta, Lily Hamburger, Julie Gersten and Leah Kaplan Robins for their support and review.

We are also extremely grateful to the Nike Foundation for its support of this work and of the Grassroots Girls Initiative, of which Awaaz-e-Niswaan and Shaheen Resource Center for Women are members.

American Jewish World Service
January 2011

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD OF A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A VIEW THROUGH THE HUMAN RIGHTS LENS	2
TRANSLATING RIGHTS INTO REALITY: STORIES FROM THE FIELD	3
Locally Led Solutions	3
Integration in Strategies and Programming	6
Non-Discrimination and Equality	8
Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability	12
CONCLUSION: A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH FOR GIRLS	14
APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	15

“A woman empowered . . . She is clothed with strength and honor. She smiles at the future. Her mouth opens with wisdom; the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”

—Proverbs 31:10, 25–26

INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Imagine the world of a 12-year-old girl in your town or city.



GIRLS PERFORM A TRADITIONAL DANCE AT A CELEBRATION HONORING MAHATMA GANDHI IN GUJARAT.

PHOTO LILY HAMBURGER

to discriminatory attitudes and policies, she and her community lack access to government resources and basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation and electricity. Domestic abuse, halted education, early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS—these are among the challenges Asma could face before even turning 16.

Unfortunately, Asma's story is not unusual. Her situation is all too familiar to many adolescent girls around the world, deprived of the chance to go to school, stay healthy and live their lives with dignity—deprived of the chance to live the lives of 12-year-old girls. They are locked into a cycle of poverty, which robs them of their childhoods and the chance to take control of their own futures. But poverty isn't natural or inevitable—and it doesn't simply result from a lack of basic resources or financial capacity.

Traditional development tools to combat poverty, which are based on an economic framework and the transfer of financial resources, are therefore not sufficient for girls like Asma, who experience gender inequality as one of the biggest drivers of poverty. Because of discrimination in their homes and communities and in the government policies and laws that rule their lives, these girls are denied equal access to the programs and development resources they need to thrive. What Asma and her peers lack is the empowerment to rise above this poverty and inequality.

Now imagine the world of Asma,¹ a 12-year-old girl in Mumbai, India. Living in a slum, unable to go to school and without a doctor to keep her healthy, Asma witnesses her mother being beaten and her peers married off to abusive husbands. Child marriage is common in Asma's community and often viewed as a way to relieve a financial burden on the household. In her impoverished area, gender discrimination and violence are widespread and socially accepted among her family and neighbors. As a Muslim, Asma is a religious minority and therefore further stigmatized. Due

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A VIEW THROUGH THE HUMAN RIGHTS LENS

We recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

—2005 World Summit Outcome (UN General Assembly Resolution 60/1)

The factors contributing to the poverty and inequality of Asma and her peers are complex, but with a human rights lens we can illuminate the root causes that go beyond a lack of resources—and identify strategies to reverse them. Human rights are integrally linked with development goals such as increased economic growth and reduction of poverty, hunger and disease. What is therefore needed is an integrated approach that promotes human rights as a critical component of development programs. This is known as a *rights-based approach to development*.

Through a human rights lens, we view poverty as the sustained or persistent deprivation of not only the resources, but also the “capabilities, choices, security and power”² necessary for the enjoyment of all rights. Asma not only lacks the money to buy the food, clothes and medicine she needs. She also lacks the *capability* to earn money with skills-based employment; the *choice* to delay marriage until she feels ready or to continue her education after getting married; the *security* to protect herself from domestic and gender-based violence; and the *power* to exercise her legal rights to education, health care, a social safety net and protection from violence. The human rights lens shows us that her poverty stems from rights violations: the government is not providing accessible resources such as schools and hospitals to her marginalized community; the legal system does not effectively address domestic violence because the 2005 law put in place to prevent and prosecute it is not being fully implemented; and many in her community are perpetuating discriminatory marriage practices that leave girls and women with little power in their relationships.

If Asma can enjoy the right to be free of child marriage and to go to school, she can learn what she needs to know to thrive, earn an income and be economically self-sufficient. In doing so, she can be less dependent on any future husband and is less likely to be a victim of domestic violence. She can contribute to her community and, in turn, raise her own children to do the same. By using a rights-based approach to empower girls, the global development community can support girls like Asma to



IN AHMEDABAD, A YOUNG WOMAN PARTICIPATES IN A COMMUNITY MEDIA PROGRAM.

PHOTO ALANA KINARSKY

be healthy, educated, protected and respected so they can grow up to change their own lives and those of generations to come.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight select elements of the rights-based approach that can help the United States craft development policies that empower adolescent girls while advancing U.S. global development goals, which include the promotion of human rights. This paper will illustrate ways in which AJWS’s partners in India are using a rights-based approach and its impact on development outcomes, which will then be used to inform our recommendations for U.S. policy. Notably, parts of the global development community, including non-governmental organizations, foundations and some governments, have already adopted aspects of this approach.

This paper will outline the following elements of a human rights-based approach to development:

Locally Led Solutions—Local communities, traditionally seen as beneficiaries of development, must instead be active participants, along with local governments, donor governments and NGOs. Girls must be seen as agents of change, not objects for aid.

Integration in Strategies and Programming—Human rights are indivisible and mutually reinforcing: legal rights and equal access to health, education, economic and social services all work together to empower girls. Because of this, poverty must be addressed as a result of many interrelated factors crossing multiple sectors.

Non-Discrimination and Equality—Inequality and discrimination result in the impaired capacity of marginalized communities to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. Development initiatives must incorporate strategies to reverse discriminatory laws and policies that lead to inequality. They must use a comprehensive approach to gender equality that includes men and boys as well as women and girls.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability—Transparency and access to information are necessary for local civil society to hold governments accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of citizens and to hold international actors accountable for a rights-based approach to development.

TRANSLATING RIGHTS INTO REALITY: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The rights-based approach to development sheds light on a broader range of factors that lead to girls' poverty and inequality—and helps generate a broader range of solutions.³ In this way, it goes beyond traditional aid or charity, which is guided by a standard economic framework for alleviating poverty. Thus, the human rights-based approach is not about merely funding programs that target girls. It is about changing the structures that place girls in

such vulnerable positions in the first place. In doing so, we can empower communities to become self-sustaining and to no longer rely on outside support. By ensuring that girls have the freedoms, information and autonomy they need to participate in and contribute to society, the rights-based approach can be used to support communities in holding their governments accountable for making progress on achieving development goals.

Locally Led Solutions

“You can't grow flowers in the sand that surrounds us. But here they are making flowers grow anyway.”

—Dina, a 16-year-old peer leader at Girls Rise India

A pillar of the human rights-based approach to development is the use of locally led solutions. Instead of viewing local people in recipient countries as objects of aid, the rights-based approach engages them as active participants in the development process. The main goal is to empower people as equals, not merely to provide them with services or resources.

The need for local participation in local solutions is particularly evident when looking at the social and cultural drivers of gender inequality and discrimination. Because social and cultural norms are extremely sensitive issues and changing them is a difficult and delicate process,

Key Concepts in Human Rights: A Primer

Participation—Every person is entitled to meaningfully contribute to the analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and accountability processes of development strategies being employed in their own communities. Civil society, including its most marginalized members, is entitled to the benefits of these processes.⁴ The concept of participation is a cross-cutting theme that runs through every element of the rights-based approach.

Indivisibility of Rights—All civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights are interlinked and related. Fulfillment or denial of any human right impacts a person's overall autonomy and economic stability. Therefore, indivisibility of rights means that development approaches must be cross-sectoral and address rights holistically with economic, social and political interventions.⁵

Equality—All human beings are holders of rights, regardless of sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, disability, political opinion, sexual orientation, religion or any other physical or social characteristic. A rights-based approach requires governments to fulfill their obligation to respect these rights equally, to actively pursue equality and to address the root causes of marginalization through their policies and programs.

Accountability—Governments and institutions must be transparent about the processes they use and actions they take with regard to the rights of their populations, and must collaborate with the local communities and stakeholders impacted by their decisions. Accountability also requires local stakeholders to have mechanisms for redress when governments or institutions fail to meet their obligations.⁶

challenging local laws and customs requires trust and buy-in from those experiencing the discrimination as well as those in positions of power, such as judges and law enforcement. Local participation therefore not only empowers people to claim their rights, but is also the most effective way of addressing the true needs of communities.

Profile of Success Girls Rise India*

**The name and location of the organization profiled here have been changed to protect its members, who are operating in a highly sensitive environment.*

Mission: To advocate for the rights of women and girls, reduce violence and gender-based discrimination and provide support services to survivors of domestic violence.

Locally Led Solution: Girls Rise India is run by local women and girls for local women and girls to support their most marginalized peers who are outside the reach of foreign development organizations.

Activities: Girls Rise India runs support groups led by peer group leaders who come from the same communities as the participants. These groups hold regular meetings, trainings and discussions to raise awareness about human rights and which ones they can claim under Indian law. The organization integrates human rights and gender equality advocacy into all of its programs, which include vocational and leadership training, health and education workshops, community discussions and legally based reform. Additionally, Girls Rise India does family-based outreach to convince parents to allow their daughters to participate in the organization's activities.



IN GUJARAT, COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING.
PHOTO LILY HAMBURGER

Girls Rise India is a small community-based organization dedicated to stopping the violence and gender-based discrimination experienced by Muslim and Dalit⁷ women and girls. Girls Rise India operates in a highly sensitive setting where, due to restrictions set forth by traditional religious beliefs, women and girls experience extremely limited mobility outside their own homes and within their communities. These girls are often married shortly after puberty without any knowledge or education of gender and sexual relations—leaving them highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Unsurprisingly, they report that violence within their homes and communities is one of the greatest impediments they face to overcoming poverty.

Girls Rise India is run by local women and girls for local women and girls. Because the inequality in their community is tied to tradition and power in domestic relationships that are considered private, the girls here are beyond the reach of outsiders and too often suffer in silence. Because the leaders and members of Girls Rise India are part of the community they seek to empower, however, they are able to reach even the most marginalized girls. They approach girls as peers, sisters and aunts, not as development worker 'outsiders.' When Girls Rise India discovered that a large population of Muslim girls in its area could not come to its office



YOUNG GIRLS TAKE PART IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN RURAL VILLAGES IN GUJARAT.

PHOTOS LILY HAMBURGER



YOUNG WOMEN FORM FINANCIAL SAVINGS GROUPS IN DHARAMPUR, GUJARAT.

PHOTOS LILY HAMBURGER

because their parents would not let them travel outside the immediate neighborhood, the organization moved into that neighborhood, bringing its programs directly to the girls. It then added more sites in other Muslim and Dalit communities and, because it was providing safe spaces located in the heart of these communities and staffed by community members, more and more girls were allowed by their families to participate.

In fact, providing safe spaces that are locally accessible is one of the main ways that Girls Rise India promotes the rights of women and girls. It offers forums that do not exist elsewhere, in which women and girls have a chance to speak freely, without fear of violence or stigma. Because the group leaders speak as Muslim or Dalit women themselves, they are accepted as peers and their messages

about health, education, economic opportunity and human rights are more easily understood and accepted. A typical meeting for Muslim women living in an isolated, impoverished community begins with readings from the Quran that discuss gender equality. The meeting leaders tell their audience that the Quran is in fact progressive toward women, and show them that it does not dictate caste or say that marriage requires a dowry payment. At their most basic level, these community meetings are a place where women and girls learn they can go outside, go to school, learn vocational skills, access health care, participate in civil society and stand up for their own rights as Muslim women and girls.

The girls involved in the organization are being educated, starting their own businesses and contributing to their communities. But Girls Rise India does not stop its work at the community level. Its goal is to create lasting change by stopping the structural drivers of poverty and gender inequality, such as domestic violence and emotional abuse. To do so, its young women leaders work with local government officials to shore up institutional support for the changes they are trying to create. They reach out to judges and law enforcement officials through gender-sensitivity trainings and advocate for better implementation of the Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. Because violence against girls and women is a visible manifestation of the gender inequality that keeps women and girls locked in poverty, by advocating with local governments to prevent and respond to violence, Girls Rise India is achieving critical development outcomes using a human rights framework.

ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT: EMPOWERING HERSELF FIRST

Before Aisha Ahmed founded Girls Rise India, she was an adolescent girl, married young with limited mobility, freedom and access to resources. When she became aware of a women's empowerment organization working locally in her neighborhood, she began volunteering and was exposed to the human rights principles that started her on the path to self-empowerment. As Aisha describes it, "I need to be free before I can help others." It took 10 years to convince her husband to accept her work in the women's empowerment movement, but he eventually did. Aisha continues her struggle to live her life with dignity. Before, her identity was sister, daughter and wife. Now, having been given a chance as a girl, Aisha is an empowered woman who gives other girls the same chance, helping them gain the skills and knowledge they need to make their lives—and the lives of others—better. Girls Rise India is fostering young leaders who are bringing girls out of their homes and into schools, family by family, community by community.

Aisha says, "Freedom means anything that men can do, we can do," and she is working to create a world where this is possible. "These girls are adolescents today, but they will be women with families and kids tomorrow," she says. Aisha's daughter, Fara, married a man of her choice when she was old enough to make that decision, and is now a peer leader at Girls Rise India. Educated, healthy and empowered, Fara is continuing the work her mother began as a girl.

U.S. Policy Recommendations to Support Locally Led Solutions

Supporting the participation of civil society in development policies is a critical part of a rights-based approach and a necessary strategy to ensure a broader and more lasting impact. The 2010 Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) on Global Development stresses a country-led approach to development, whereby countries take on ownership and responsibility in partnership with the United States so they ultimately become independent and no longer require development assistance. In order for this promising model to succeed in reaching the most marginalized communities, the U.S. must ensure that “country-led” does not just mean “government-led.” Country-led strategies must start at the local level with meaningful civil society participation—and that means the engagement of women and girls.

Building the capacity of local organizations such as Girls Rise India is essential to reaching marginalized communities and changing the driving force of discriminatory gender attitudes embedded in law and society. This capacity building involves increasing the level of awareness and knowledge within civil society, particularly among the local groups responsible for implementing the programs.

AJWS therefore recommends the following:

- The United States must fund capacity building for civil society in recipient countries so that all may participate meaningfully as stakeholders in a country-led approach to development. Examples of capacity-building support include networking opportunities; exposure visits to see successful programs in other regions; and trainings on legal and financial literacy, gender and sexuality.
- U.S. programs must utilize locally led solutions to empower girls from initial design through implementation. This must include analysis of successful local projects and consultation with the leaders of those projects. It must also include the establishment of local service delivery systems and local procurement of goods and services.



COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS FROM A RURAL VILLAGE IN GUJARAT ATTEND THEIR MONTHLY MEETING.

PHOTOS LILY HAMBURGER

Integration in Strategies and Programming

“If girls are empowered, it spreads education ... when education spreads, there is the possibility of changing mindsets ... stopping violence.”

—Jameela Nishat, founder of Shaheen Resource Center for Women

A key element of the rights-based approach to development is using an integrated strategy to comprehensively address the political, socioeconomic and legal factors that create the conditions of poverty and inequality. Human rights related to each of these factors are indivisible and mutually reinforcing and therefore must be addressed holistically in order to be fully realized.

When looking at the many factors that disempower girls—lack of resources, education, economic opportunities, access to health services or legal recourse—it is clear that each one reinforces the others. Gender inequality thrives in a web of interrelated human rights violations, and all must be addressed if any are to be truly overcome.

Profile of Success

Shaheen Resource Center for Women

Mission: To help Muslim and Dalit women and girls combat gender discrimination and violence.

Integration in Strategy and Programming:

Shaheen integrates cross-sectoral solutions to poverty, inequality, violence and discrimination. Health, education, economic opportunities, social change strategies and legal advocacy are combined in a one-stop-shop to support and empower girls.

Activities: Shaheen provides health education classes, a weekly clinic with a local physician, and a shelter offering counseling and legal assistance to victims of violence. It also provides support and classes to help girls complete their secondary education, as well as vocational training in embroidery, English and computer skills. Shaheen uses peer leaders and outreach staff to conduct home visits to talk to families about the rights of girls in their households, and organizes public demonstrations to raise the visibility of its mission. It also integrates education about legal rights into all of its programs, in particular, educating marginalized and vulnerable girls and women about their rights under the Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005.

Shaheen Resource Center for Women offers programs in rural areas outside the city of Hyderabad that lack infrastructure, schools, health centers, sanitation and vocational opportunities. Girls in these communities face numerous barriers to economic and political empowerment and equality, of which early marriage and domestic violence are among the most harmful. Unless these issues are addressed as fundamental to the more traditional socioeconomic development indicators, these girls will remain in poverty.

In this setting, many girls seeking vocational skills for economic empowerment also need health services and information to address basic hygiene, maternal and child health issues, and treatment for disease and/or violence-related health problems. They also need social support and legal protection. Instead of addressing each need separately with parallel programs, Shaheen weaves all of its programs together in a package that is easily accessed by even the most marginalized girls. A girl coming for computer skills training, for example, is linked to numerous other services as part and parcel of that training.

It is the girls themselves who lead their peers through workshops and support groups and advocate with local officials for enforcement of their human rights. Since marriage has been identified by the girls as a critical factor to be addressed, Shaheen has used its model to focus on marital rights and on stopping dowry practices, a custom traditionally required for marriage but not enshrined in Indian law. The educated and empowered girl leaders at Shaheen advocate for girls' and women's rights with judges and religious and civil law enforcement. They recognize that even with adequate health, education and jobs, they can't change things for future generations of girls unless they know—and demand—their rights.

Shaheen's advocacy doesn't stop in its immediate vicinity, however; its members seek institutional change throughout society, starting with local education systems. In 2009 it persuaded 16 school principals in the communities it serves to offer equality training using its comprehensive model for empowering girls. Now more and more girls are coming to Shaheen to receive the support they need to overcome poverty, the empowerment they need to seek equality and the human rights advocacy training they need to ensure equal access to development resources and economic opportunities.

U.S. Policy Recommendations to Promote Integration in Strategies and Programming

An integrated strategy that addresses the economic, social and structural drivers of poverty is a key element of the rights-based approach. U.S. development policy must support the work of organizations like Shaheen that use human rights to address the many interrelated factors contributing to poverty and inequality for adolescent girls. Currently, U.S. foreign aid exists in separate, rigid funding streams with little or no flexibility, and reporting requirements are usually cumbersome. Funding is too often divided by sector (e.g., health, education, infrastructure) and therefore cannot be used to support integrated programs like the ones offered by Shaheen. This restrictive, top-down approach, which often results in parallel or overlapping programs, makes it difficult for such community-based organizations to utilize these aid resources.

AJWS therefore recommends the following:

- The United States must remove funding restrictions and allow for flexibility of design for locally led, integrated programs that comprehensively tackle poverty and inequality at their roots.
- U.S. aid must eliminate sectoral and prescriptive approaches to empowering women and girls and allow community-based organizations to design and implement the integrated programs that work best in their local settings.
- All U.S. development agencies must coordinate strategies so that we are using a whole-of-government approach to empower girls to rise out of poverty. Only an integrated strategy can support integrated programs.



SCHOOL GIRLS ATTEND A BOOK FAIR IN VALSAD, GUJARAT.

PHOTO SIDDHESH PAWAR

ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT: RESPONDING TO MULTIPLE NEEDS—LOCALLY

Jameela Nishat started Shaheen after working with Asmita, an Indian national women’s rights organization. When she recognized that the broader women’s empowerment movement was not reaching India’s Muslim population, she started her own English classes and vocational training for Muslim girls, but soon discovered these girls faced many challenges beyond lack of schooling. Stuck in early marriages, lacking basic health care and too often falling victim to violence, what they lacked were human rights protections. So Jameela began linking the girls in her classes to other resources within the growing organization, and made the teaching of gender equality and rights within marriage part of every service provided. Using this integrated, rights-based approach, she has built an organization run by girls who use their newfound knowledge and strength to help empower others who are, like they once were, extremely vulnerable and marginalized.

Notably, it was because Jameela was from the community herself that she was able to establish trust with these girls and their families. Now that the community sees the positive impact Shaheen has had, they are no longer hesitant to take advantage of its programs and services.

Non-Discrimination and Equality

“Earlier I had this feeling that if [my wife] went out of the house, I would lose face in the community. Now I know that her going out gives me prestige.”

—Member of SAHAYOG’s Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) initiative⁸

Equality is integral to human rights. Because we are all human, we all have rights. Any discrimination that prevents girls (or members of any group) from realizing their rights is a violation of those rights. Not only is inequality an affront to the inherent dignity of every human being, but evidence indicates that the social, political and legal discrimination that leads to unequal opportunities also decreases a country’s development potential.⁹ When large portions of the world’s population, such as girls and young women, are disempowered, they cannot contribute fully to civil and economic life. But when girls and women live free of discrimination and are given equal opportunities, the impact can be tremendous. For example, when girls have access to educational opportunities, their eventual wages will be higher. One extra year of education for girls can lead to an increase in wages of between 10 and 20 percent.¹⁰ Further, multiple studies have found that countries where women are paid higher wages have stronger economies and do better in terms of overall development indicators.¹¹

To ensure that girls have equal opportunities and are free from discrimination requires an empowered local civil society that can advocate for better policies, laws and enforcement. Further, it requires that countries giving



YOUNG GIRL LEARNS THE ALPHABET AT HER SCHOOL IN DHARAMPUR, GUJARAT.

PHOTO LILY HAMBURGER

development aid make their programs and services available to those who most need them, and do so in ways that are accessible; free from discrimination, stigma and other physical or social barriers; and culturally acceptable—with particular sensitivity to gender issues.

Profile of Success

Awaaz-e-Niswaan (AEN)

Mission: To provide a space for marginalized women and girls to come together to address gender discrimination and violence, and to support every woman and girl in achieving self-determination.

Promotion of Equality: AEN helps girls understand and claim their rights using multiple entry points such as health, education, vocational training, human rights training, community discussions and legal services to engage girls and empower them to become active members of civil society.

Activities: Through health education and peer-led support groups, AEN teaches girls about the negative health impacts of early marriage and childbearing at a young age. It offers a scholarship program to assist girls in completing their education through college, and helps them secure jobs through partnerships with local companies, which it also links to rights training. In addition, AEN connects girls to legal support and teaches them how to approach law enforcement to file police reports, as well as how to interact with authority figures to demand their rights.

Awaaz-e-Niswaan (AEN) was formed to fight the discrimination, violence and lack of autonomy faced by Muslim women and girls in their families, communities and society in Mumbai's slums. AEN provides a safe space for these women and girls to come together to address these problems.

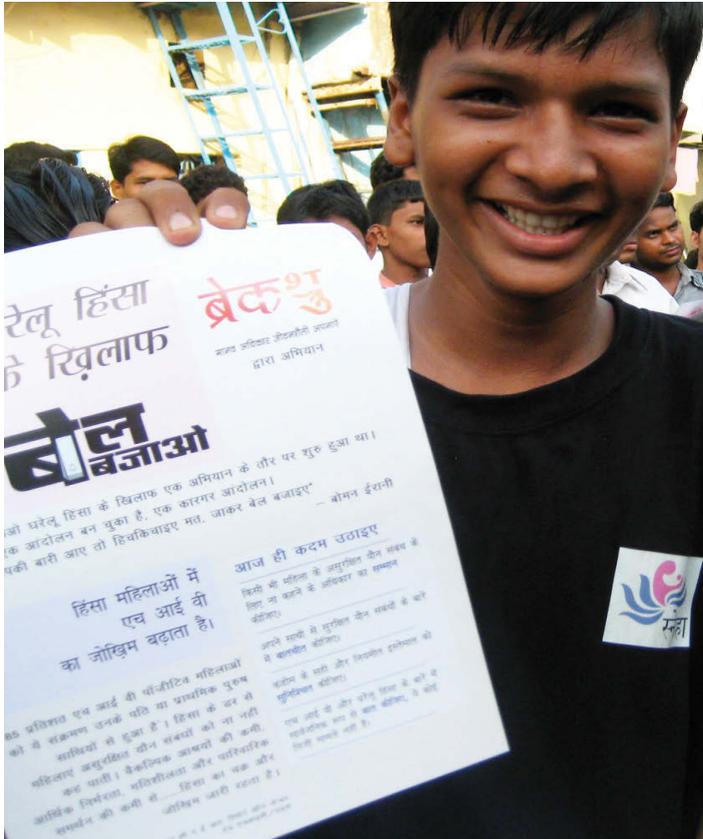
Based on the needs identified by the population it serves, AEN mobilizes its members to engage in advocacy for matrimonial, alimony and property rights, and against domestic and sexual violence, with the goal of promoting gender equality as its driving force. Early marriage and gender discrimination, condoned and promoted by their communities, confine these girls within their homes and keep them from equally accessing the many resources available in Mumbai. Furthermore, their Muslim communities, like so many in India, are discriminated against and do not have equal access to infrastructure and government resources. And the laws that should protect the women and girls in these communities, such as the Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005, are not adequately enforced.

Because it employs a rights-based approach, AEN pairs its outreach to women and girls with organized campaigning to directly confront the marginalization that fuels the poverty and violence in their daily lives. In 1999, AEN held a national conference on Muslim women's rights, which resulted in the formation of the Muslim Women's



IN A RURAL VILLAGE IN GUJARAT, GIRLS LEARN MATH THROUGH HANDS-ON METHODS.

PHOTO RASHMI KAPADIA



YOUNG MAN PARTICIPATES IN A WOMEN'S RIGHTS RALLY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MUMBAI.

PHOTO AMY ZIEGNER

Rights Network. Educated and empowered, the girls at AEN are now some of the key players working to reverse poverty, inequality, violence and discrimination in Mumbai. Without addressing these underlying factors, traditional economic development aid simply couldn't be as effective.

Recognizing the barriers girls face in accessing resources—and understanding the psychological impact of such barriers—AEN thoroughly integrates gender considerations into all its programs, which include health workshops, education, legal support and advocacy to push for government accountability. Through these programs, girls learn negotiating skills and how to overcome shyness and fear so they can be vocal about defending their rights and can participate in civil and political life. Practical learning (for example, a trip to the police station to file a report) helps them grow comfortable with the idea of using the legal system to uphold their rights.

AEN has become a visible force in its community, raising awareness about the rights of women and girls and advocating for non-discriminatory policies, enforcement of laws that protect and support gender equality, and the equal availability, accessibility and acceptability of quality development resources.

Profile of Success

Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW)

Mission: To promote gender equality and an end to violence against women and girls by enlisting the support of men and boys.

Promotion of Equality: The Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) initiative was founded by SAHAYOG, which strives to advance gender equality and women's health using a human rights framework. With over 500 individuals participating, MASVAW works to increase understanding among men that violence against women is a human rights issue impacting the entire community, and mobilizes them to advocate against violence in their own families and communities as well as with local and national governments.

Activities: MASVAW leads workshops on gender and masculinity, training programs for peer leaders and facilitators, and peer-led youth and men's groups in rural settings, as well as at universities and colleges throughout Uttar Pradesh. The group provides a space for men and boys to reflect on violence against women as a human rights issue demanding their intervention. Peer group activities include organizing sexual harassment committees, debates and film screenings, and providing support to the national women's rights movement. MASVAW has over 100 violence-prevention watch groups that monitor violence in their communities and intervene when it occurs. And it partners with over 25 journalists in 12 districts to leverage local media to report cases of violence and help build public awareness about gender-based violence and efforts to end it.

Programs that reach beyond women and girls to address inequality and discriminatory attitudes among boys and men are also essential to achieving gender equality.

SAHAYOG, an organization based in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, one of India's most socioeconomically deprived states, has been a driving force in engaging men and boys in its work to promote gender equality and women's rights. Recognizing that, as perpetrators of violence, men and boys have a critical role to play in stopping it, the organization founded the Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) initiative.



GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN A HEALTH EDUCATION CLASS AT A RURAL SCHOOL IN GUJARAT.

PHOTO SIDDHESH PAWAR

MASVAW offers men a safe space to confront their own discriminatory attitudes and those of their peers. They learn anger management strategies and how to make changes in their relationships with women, including ceasing the use of violence and coercive sex in their marriages. A study of MASVAW members revealed that the men now have a greater understanding of violence against women as a human rights issue and have accepted their own role in stopping it.¹²

Through MASVAW, SAHAYOG not only addresses violence on a personal, local level; it is committed to advocating for changes in government structures and law enforcement

to help bring its local solutions to the national stage. MASVAW organizes forums in which men work together to ensure that district government officials register and prosecute incidents of violence against women and girls. Because political and social pressures often keep such violence hidden and therefore unprosecuted, MASVAW's role in reaching out to public officials, usually also men, is invaluable. Men from the program have even joined with women and girls in advocacy activities around International Women's Day and the International Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women.

U.S. Policy Recommendations to Ensure Non-Discrimination and Equality

The rights-based approach requires development actors to confront inequality at its roots in discriminatory customs, laws, policies, practices and resource allocation. Doing so will ensure that everyone who needs it will benefit from development and be fully able to participate in the political, economic and social life of their country.

AJWS therefore recommends the following:

- The United States must ensure that its aid programs and strategies are non-discriminatory by implementing cross-cutting gender integration and analysis throughout agency planning, budgeting and staffing processes so that gender equality is promoted with every foreign engagement.
- Aid agencies must ensure inclusion of the most marginalized populations of girls—who are frequently excluded from development strategies—by seeking out local organizations with ties to these populations.
- U.S. development agencies must hire gender experts to help them incorporate learning, research and best practices, which include the involvement of men and boys.
- The U. S. must use its resources to support empowerment of local girls and women, as well as boys and men, to organize and advocate for non-discriminatory laws, policies and resource allocation in their own countries.
- The State Department must promote gender equality as a diplomatic priority, encouraging foreign governments to support it as a goal.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

We create change agents.

—A common saying at the Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA)

Accountability is necessary to ensure that human rights-based development outcomes are not just aspirations but reality. When governments and aid organizations fail to meet their obligations to achieve these outcomes, a strong accountability process provides redress. Active participation on the part of civil society is required in the monitoring and evaluation of policies, laws and resource allocation to ensure that they are equitable. And transparent and accessible information mechanisms—including public forums with stakeholders in the local language, wide circulation of printed materials and reports, and use of right-to-information laws—are needed to document progress. India's 2005 Right to Information Act has been used by Indian civil society as an essential advocacy tool for achieving equitable distribution of funds, particularly to reach the most marginalized populations. With such processes in place, civil society and governments—both donor and recipient—can hold themselves and one another mutually accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights.

For both donor and recipient countries, accountability applies to both the citizen-government and donor-recipient relationships. A traditional economic development approach often puts the burden of accountability on the recipient organization or country partner. The rights-based approach requires development donors such as the U.S. to also be accountable to recipient organizations and governments by including them in the monitoring and evaluation processes. And it calls for local advocacy groups to be involved in a highly participatory and democratic process that encourages ownership and sustainability.



IN GUJARAT, YOUNG WOMEN TRAIN TO BECOME COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS.

PHOTOS LILY HAMBURGER

Profile of Success

Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA)

Mission: To build a sustainable model of social change that works both to address health care provision and to empower women and children.

Accountability Strategies: SNEHA works with government officials to monitor the allocation of health resources and the implementation of the Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. It also works to register violence as a public health concern within the government and monitors and evaluates how the health system works with other sectors to respond to and prevent violence.

Activities: SNEHA empowers girls and their families regarding their health, their rights and the resources available to them to prevent and respond to violence. It runs a hospital and shelter in Mumbai's Dharavi slum, the largest in Asia, where its center for women and children in crisis is committed to restoring the physical, emotional and psychological health of victims of domestic violence. SNEHA provides vocational training, income-generation programs, nursing courses, a library and study classes. It also works to change social attitudes and behaviors through women-led community groups, links women and girls with legal services and helps them register reports of violence with police. Additionally, SNEHA monitors violence in the community and uses its findings to advocate for better enforcement of the Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

The **Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA)** works to empower individuals in slum communities to be catalysts of change by mobilizing them to monitor resource allocation in the government health system in Mumbai. Through a model that builds on strong partnerships with government, SNEHA works with over 30 health facilities and more than 1,000 slum residents to create sustainable change. Some examples are its partnerships with the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai to improve the quality of perinatal care, and with the Integrated Child Development Scheme to improve the nutrition of children living in the city's slums.¹³



GIRL ATTENDS A RALLY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MUMBAI.

PHOTO AMY ZIEGNER

SNEHA also applies this participatory approach to monitoring implementation of existing laws. The Indian Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 entitles victims of violence to immediate services, such as medical treatment and shelter, and establishes judicial mechanisms to prosecute cases of domestic violence, rape, threats, sexual harassment and economic abuse. It also delineates standards of conduct for police officers, including awareness and sensitivity training, and contains a budget requirement for implementation.¹⁴ This law is not being sufficiently implemented, however, and violence is still condoned in many Indian communities. SNEHA monitors cases of violence and ensures that victims receive care and services, and that perpetrators are brought to justice under the law.

In addition, SNEHA incorporates women's rights and gender inequality into its own violence prevention and response work, providing not only immediate medical,

psychological and social service interventions to women and children experiencing violence, but raising awareness about legal rights through community outreach activities. Its long-term strategy is to empower girls and women through community mobilization and the formation of Slum Action Committees (SACs), which participate in awareness campaigns using street plays, films, audio-visual aids and more.

U.S. Policy Recommendations to Improve Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

A transparent and participatory accountability process, which includes the monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and funding intended to impact girls, is essential to ensure that development resources are being used most effectively. This process ensures that the U.S. government is held accountable to its taxpayers for foreign assistance spending, to aid recipients working in partnership with U.S.-funded programs and to the local communities those programs aim to benefit. For U.S. policy, integrating accountability mechanisms into foreign assistance strategies is key to increasing aid effectiveness and achieving desired development outcomes, which include advancing human rights.

AJWS therefore recommends the following:

- The United States must build accountability mechanisms, including free and accessible information systems for local civil society and governments, into its development programs, with special attention to reaching marginalized populations such as adolescent girls.
- The U.S. must ensure accountability on gender issues by integrating gender analysis into the monitoring and evaluation processes across multiple agencies and into the following strategies, programs and initiatives: the U.S. Global Development Strategy, the implementation of USAID's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), the U.S. Global Development Council and the National Security Council's Interagency Policy Committee on Global Development.
- U.S. development programs must build and support local civil society's capacity to advocate for accountability by providing resources and training to improve information systems and foster mechanisms for redress within recipient countries.

CONCLUSION

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH FOR GIRLS



YOUNG GIRLS TAKE PART IN A SCIENCE LESSON IN DHARAMPUR, GUJARAT.

PHOTO LILY HAMBURGER

Gender inequality undermines development goals and U.S. investments in developing countries by excluding a large and powerful segment of the world's population from the process—namely, adolescent girls. A rights-based approach not only respects the inherent dignity of every individual girl, it also recognizes that girls are key to achieving development and human rights outcomes. Girls make up a significant portion of the global community: There are close to 900 million girls and young women aged 10 to 24 in the world.¹⁵ The economic growth of any given country, therefore, is impacted by the degree to which this vital population is empowered to participate in economic, political and social life. When girls grow up healthy and educated, their well-being as caretakers and providers for their families affects the

whole community and is passed down through subsequent generations. Thus, investing in adolescent girls is an extremely effective strategy to achieve development goals and promote gender equality.

But the U.S. does not currently direct sufficient funding or implement the most effective strategies to support the kind of policies, programs and resources that meet the needs of women and girls—and empower them as agents of change. This paper has demonstrated how a rights-based approach uses a broader range of underlying factors driving girls' poverty and inequality to provide a wide range of solutions addressing the root causes. This approach represents an effective and sustainable model for U.S. foreign assistance programs and policies to leverage increased investment in adolescent girls to produce positive development outcomes.

The 2010 Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) on Global Development launched a historic new vision for the global development process. It emphasizes country-led strategies, whole-of-government approaches, sustainable outcomes and aid effectiveness—goals that would be greatly enhanced by the application of the human rights-based approach. By building on local capacity to lead in the development process, we can foster country ownership that is truly representative of community needs. By using our development support for integrated, multi-sectoral strategies, we can build on the different capabilities of all sectors and agencies. By confronting discrimination and inequality, we can ensure that the entire population benefits from and contributes to development outcomes. By ensuring mutual accountability from all actors in the development process, we can make our foreign assistance as effective and responsive as possible.

And by empowering girls throughout the development process, we can magnify the impact of these programs. By empowering girls, we can change the world.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Locally Led Solutions

- The United States must fund capacity building for civil society in recipient countries so that all may participate meaningfully as stakeholders in a country-led approach to development. Examples of capacity-building support include networking opportunities; exposure visits to see successful programs in other regions; and trainings on legal and financial literacy, gender and sexuality.
- U.S. programs must utilize locally led solutions to empower girls from initial design through implementation. This must include analysis of successful local projects and consultation with the leaders of those projects. It must also include the establishment of local service delivery systems and local procurement of goods and services.

Integration in Strategies and Programming

- The United States must remove funding restrictions and allow for flexibility of design for locally led, integrated programs that comprehensively tackle poverty and inequality at their roots.
- U.S. aid agencies must eliminate sectoral and prescriptive approaches to empowering women and girls and allow community-based organizations to design and implement the integrated programs that work best in their local settings.
- All U.S. development agencies must coordinate strategies so that we are using a whole-of-government approach to empower girls to rise out of poverty. Only an integrated strategy can support integrated programs.

Non-Discrimination and Equality

- The United States must ensure that its aid programs and strategies are non-discriminatory by implementing cross-cutting gender integration and analysis throughout agency planning, budgeting and staffing processes so that gender equality is promoted with every foreign engagement.
- Aid agencies must ensure inclusion of the most marginalized populations of girls—who are frequently excluded from development strategies—by seeking out local organizations with ties to these populations.



SCHOOL GIRLS ATTEND A CO-ED EDUCATION CAMP IN DHARAMPUR, GUJARAT.

PHOTO LILY HAMBURGER

- U.S. development agencies must hire gender experts to help them incorporate learning, research and best practices, which include the involvement of men and boys.
- The U. S. must use its resources to support empowerment of local girls and women, as well as boys and men, to organize and advocate for non-discriminatory laws, policies and resource allocation in their own countries.
- The State Department must promote gender equality as a diplomatic priority, encouraging foreign governments to support it as a goal.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

- The United States must build accountability mechanisms, including free and accessible information systems for local civil society and governments, into its development programs, with special attention to reaching marginalized populations such as adolescent girls.
- The U.S. must ensure accountability on gender issues by integrating gender analysis into the monitoring and evaluation processes across multiple agencies and into the following strategies, programs and initiatives: the U.S. Global Development Strategy, the implementation of USAID's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), the U.S. Global Development Council and the National Security Council's Interagency Policy Committee on Global Development.
- U.S. development programs must build and support local civil society's capacity to advocate for accountability by providing resources and training to improve information systems and foster mechanisms for redress within recipient countries.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ All names of individuals profiled in this paper with the exception of Jameela Nishat have been changed to protect their safety and privacy.
- ² *Substantive Issues Arising in the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: General Comment No. 14 (2000)* (Geneva: United Nations, 2000) 5.
- ³ Peter Uvin, *Human Rights and Development* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004).
- ⁴ *Human Rights, Health and Poverty Reduction Strategies*, Health and Human Rights Publications Series, (Geneva: United Nations, 2008).
- ⁵ *Human Rights, Health and Poverty Reduction Strategies*.
- ⁶ *Human Rights, Health and Poverty Reduction Strategies*.
- ⁷ Dalits, the “untouchables” of India’s caste system, continue to suffer from extreme discrimination in the areas of housing, access to water, land rights, education and access to the legal system.
- ⁸ *A Journey Towards Justice: Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women* (Lucknow, India: MASVAW Secretariat, SAHAYOG) 5.
- ⁹ *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development Overview* (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2005).
- ¹⁰ George Psacharopoulos and Harry Anthony Patrinos, *Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update*, Policy Research Working Paper 2881 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2002).
- ¹¹ Ricardo Hausmann, et al., *The Global Gender Gap Report 2008* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2008).
- ¹² *A Journey Towards Justice*.
- ¹³ *Protection Of Women From Domestic Violence Act 2005* (Lawyers Collective Women’s Rights Initiative).
- ¹⁴ “Our Approach,” Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA), 2009, 30 November 2010 <<http://www.snehamumbai.org/about-us/our-approach.html>>.
- ¹⁵ Ruth Levine, et al., *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2009).



American Jewish World Service
45 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

t: 212.792.2900
800.889.7146
f: 212.792.2930

ajws.org • ajws@ajws.org
facebook.com/americanjewishworldservice
twitter.com/ajws



Inspired by Judaism's commitment to justice, **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world.