



# ADVANCING SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS

## THE PROBLEM

Across the globe, women and girls face discrimination and alarming rates of violence. An estimated one in three women will be physically abused during her lifetime and will experience sexual violence or some other form of violence. In some countries, the numbers are even more devastating.

In addition, many women and girls lack the autonomy, knowledge and community support to make critical decisions about their health, education, professions, sexuality, relationships and marriage. For example, 15 million girls under the age of 18 enter into early or forced marriages each year, making them more prone to a wide range of problems: they are more likely to be illiterate, live in poverty, face domestic violence and die in childbirth.

Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people in many places face harassment, discrimination, violence and even murder. Many are ostracized simply for who they are or whom they love. Sadly, more than 75 countries have enshrined hatred and bigotry into law, making homosexuality illegal—punishable by prison terms and, in some cases, by death.

### WE BELIEVE EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO:

- Pursue equal opportunities in society without limitations based on gender or sexual orientation
- Make decisions about their body, health and life
- Live free from violence, abuse and hate

## OUR SOLUTION

To counter these challenges, AJWS supports 185 social change organizations working to advance the human rights of women, girls and LGBTQI+ people. Our courageous grantees are on the frontlines fighting discrimination, educating communities about their health and rights, combating violence and hate crimes, and ensuring that women, girls and LGBTQI+ people can live healthy lives and pursue their aspirations with dignity.

We are helping grassroots groups grow stronger and more sustainable, lending them visibility and ensuring their concerns are included in broader social change efforts at the local, national and global levels to build strong movements capable of ushering in lasting change.



Jeevika Development Society (JDS) trains and empowers women to become engaged in local governance in West Bengal—shifting the power structure in traditionally male-dominated areas. *Photo by Sasithon Pooviriyakul*

## OUR IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

The activists, organizations and movements we support are making progress in their communities and around the globe:

- For years in Senegal, the crime of rape was dismissed as the equivalent of a misdemeanor—and convictions were rare. But AJWS grantee **Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS)** refused to let the past dictate the future. In January 2020, this group of women lawyers led a massive movement to change the legal code. AJS worked closely with members of parliament and applied public pressure to criminalize rape definitively—and they won. Now, rape convictions carry a minimum of a 10-year sentence—a serious punishment befitting the horrendous crime.
- In Kenya, after hundreds violently attacked an HIV/AIDS clinic near Mombasa, **Initiative for Equality and Non Discrimination (INEND)** began building a culture of tolerance. INEND trained over 320 boda boda (motorbike taxi) drivers—many of whom were among

In 2020, AJWS invested \$5.8 million in 185 social change organizations in 8 countries to promote sexual health and rights.

Dominican Republic • El Salvador  
India • Kenya • Liberia • Nicaragua  
Thailand • Uganda

the attackers—to be compassionate LGBTQI+ allies, and together they are making Kenya a more accepting and open place for LGBTQI+ people.

- In September 2018, the Indian Supreme Court made history by striking down Section 377 of the Constitution, which made consensual sex between same-sex adults illegal. **Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action** and other AJWS grantees helped lead this charge for equality in India, and millions of LGBTQI+ Indians are now freer to safely be who they are and love who they love.



In 2009, the Pride parade in Chiang Mai, Thailand, was marred by violence and intimidation. A decade later, and largely thanks to several AJWS grantees, 2019's Pride was a massive success—a celebration for the country's LGBTQI+ community. Here, AJWS grantee Mplus Foundation joins the march. *Photograph by Allison Joyce*

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## ABOUT AJWS

**American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** is the leading Jewish organization working to fight poverty and pursue justice in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. By supporting hundreds of social change organizations in 18 countries, we respond to the most pressing issues of our time—from disasters, genocide and hunger, to the persecution of women and minorities worldwide. With Jewish values and a global reach, AJWS is making a difference in millions of lives and bringing a more just and equitable world closer for all.



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