



ADVANCING SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Jeevika Development Society (JDS) empowers nearly 10,000 women from 54 villages in West Bengal, India, to advance gender equality, participate in local governance, and gain greater agency over decisions that affect their lives and bodies. These girls trained by JDS are changing how people view what women and girls can do and achieve. *Photo by Sasithon Pooviriyakul*

THE CHALLENGES

Across the globe, women, girls, and LGBTQI+ people face discrimination and alarming rates of violence. Patriarchal values fuel discriminatory laws and practices that prevent these populations from enjoying the freedom to make their own decisions over their health, education, professions and futures.

The statistics are staggering: An estimated one in three women today will experience sexual violence or some other form of abuse in her lifetime. Every year, about 12 million girls get married before age 18—many by force. And in nearly 70 countries, being gay is a criminal offense, often punishable by prison and, in some cases, death.

WE'RE BUILDING A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO:

- Pursue equal opportunities in society without limitations based on gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation
- Make their own decisions about their body and live free from violence
- Access healthcare that enhances their sexual and reproductive rights

AJWS works on these issues because we believe no one should be forced to live in fear or denied the ability to make their own decisions about their lives and bodies. These basic rights are essential to enable all human beings to live as equals, love whom they love, and be protected under the law.

HOW WE MAKE CHANGE

AJWS supports 157 social change organizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean working to advance sexual health and rights, promote gender equality, and combat discrimination, violence and hate crimes. The activists we support work tirelessly to build powerful, inclusive social movements that aim to shift how their families and society value their full humanity. They pursue sustainable change, from mobilizing girls in India fighting back against child marriage and gender-based violence, to organizing a national movement in Kenya to overturn the country's egregious anti-homosexuality law.

We believe that activists within these communities understand their needs and challenges best—that's why AJWS follows their lead in developing strategies to grow strong social movements and bring about a brighter future for everyone.

OUR IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

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

- In September 2018 in **India**, the country's 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 whom they love.
- 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 2021, AJWS invested \$5.8 million in 157 social change organizations in 8 countries to promote sexual health and rights.

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

- In Karnataka, **India**, young women face intense social pressure from their families and communities to drop out of school and marry. Families view education as a poor investment on girls, as they are expected to bear children and maintain a household, rather than pursue careers. But AJWS grantee **Sakhi Trust** assists adolescent girls with school fees and housing, so they can keep studying and have a safe place to live without the pressure to marry. One of more than 70 organizations pursuing gender equality in India with support from AJWS, Sakhi helps young people unearth their own courage, voices and dreams.



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

☎ 212.792.2900
800.889.7146
✉ ajws@ajws.org

🌐 ajws.org
f /americanjewishworldservice
t /ajws
@ /americanjewishworldservice

