



A Qualitative Assessment of **Girls Gaining Ground**

Working Towards Female Empowerment in
Maharashtra, India

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Executive Summary

Bhavishya Alliance is a multi-sector partnership aimed at reducing the rate of child undernutrition in Maharashtra, India. The Girls Gaining Ground (GGG) program is one of Bhavishya Alliance's pilot interventions for adolescent girls. With a strong focus on girls in rural and urban slum areas, GGG empowers adolescent girls to make informed decisions about their health in order to prevent undernourishment in their generation and their future families.

GGG is a catalyst for empowerment, encouraging program participants to realize the "freedom of choice and action to shape one's life, including the control over resources, decisions and institutions necessary to do so."¹ GGG creates a safe space for girls to spend time together with an educated female facilitator from their community. The facilitators themselves benefit from the GGG program, and experience positive transformation as a result of participating in the facilitator trainings and teaching the GGG curriculum. GGG provides invaluable information on health and personal hygiene that helps the girls to better understand their bodies. Another key element of the curriculum is the provision of information about existing government services and encouraging the girls to demand these services. GGG empowers the girls and the community by exposing gaps in these services that may otherwise have not been addressed. Finally, high levels of empowerment through

GGG also lead to community action; many GGG participants become engaged community members.

To address the economic needs of the girls, the GGG program over time may provide vocational training to improve the economic conditions of the girls themselves and their communities, fill a gap for girls with limited social networks to use for economic empowerment, and increase the age of marriage, which research has linked to improved economic benefits for girls.

Based on the positive assessment of the program, GGG should standardize some of the strengths of the program to further improve on the existing GGG program. The training and curriculum should include specific criteria for the selection of facilitators and include community recognition of the GGG successes. Within the curriculum itself, Bhavishya Alliance should include supplemental materials to better reach girls with low literacy levels or those who exclusively speak local, tribal dialects. The scope of the program should also encourage the eventual creation of a parallel program for boys, and the curriculum should also include information on asset building and basic financial education to supplement the economic benefits to the girls. Overall, the GGG program is a creative and exciting program which advances the empowerment of girls around Maharashtra state.



Introduction to Girls Gaining Ground

In the developing world, women and girls experience disparities in knowledge building, life-skill development and control over decision-making. Inequalities between the lives of girls and boys in the developing world can be closely linked with inequalities in levels of empowerment. Often girls in the developing world miss out on basic education, childhood experiences and community participation. Cultural norms, social traditions and lack of choices within households frequently leave girls behind economically, in poor health, and isolated from their male counterparts.

Adolescent girls in India face many challenges. Despite the Indian government's wide range of programmatic efforts, girls throughout India remain isolated in their households and communities. Girls in rural and urban slum areas live predominantly without voices, options and opportunities to increase their social and economic potential which could advance themselves, their families, and their communities. The high rate of undernutrition is one of the prime issues correlated with the lack of empowerment among Indian girls. In the state of Maharashtra, nearly 40% of children are undernourished, and over 66% of these undernourished children are female.²

Girls Gaining Ground (GGG) is a pilot intervention program coordinated by Bhavishya Alliance, to empower adolescent girls in rural and urban slum areas of Maharashtra. Bhavishya Alliance began in 2005 as a multi-sector partnership between Hindustan Unilever, UNICEF Maharashtra and the Synergos Institute to address child undernutrition in India. Bhavishya Alliance encourages government agencies, corporations and NGOs to work together to develop affordable and

sustainable solutions to problems such as girl child undernutrition. The organization has designed a variety of interventions at different stages of a woman's life cycle in order to reduce overall child undernutrition. Bhavishya Alliance and their partners designed GGG to empower adolescent girls by informing them of an array of critical topics, such as health, hygiene, nutrition, and decision-making skills, thereby increasing the levels of empowerment in adolescent girls. These girls can then make decisions which will break the cycle of undernutrition.

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



SHRADDHA SHRINGARPURE

Aroehan, Thane

Shraddha Shringarpure was first introduced to the Mokhada block within Maharashtra's Thane district while conducting research for her Master's degree from Mumbai's Nirmala Niketan School

of Social Work. Upon graduation, she left the city to return to this rural area at the suggestion of a professor associated with Aroehan. Shraddha has since become the face of GGG in this area, as she spends her days and evenings traveling great distances to attend sessions and facilitator meetings. She maintains a close, open relationship with the GGG facilitators and girls and often proactively seeks ways to highlight their efforts within their communities. Her inspiring dedication to this program and the women of Mokhada is evident through the many success of GGG in this area.

The target group for the project is approximately 10,000 adolescent girls aged 10–19 years in the state of Maharashtra. The girls are enrolled from communities and residential schools in nine tribal blocks and one urban area in Mumbai. The project invests in girls' empowerment, knowledge of and access to government services, improved nutrition and health education and also creates safe spaces for girls, enhancing the girls' self-image and their role in society. GGG approaches education and empowerment through a holistic curriculum addressing four pillars of life skills: learning to be, learning to know, learning to live together, and learning to do.³ The sessions span a wide range of topics from Know Your Body to Laws Related to Women.⁴ The result of girls learning about these topics through GGG will be empowered women and self-motivated and informed future household and village leaders.

Intervening with adolescent girls is a crucial and important programmatic decision. Adolescence is an important stage of growth for children. During adolescence, girls are preparing for their future roles as adult women.⁵ Intervening at this stage can help girls overcome barriers to empowerment in adulthood since girls represent the next generation of mothers and social and economic actors. Many development agencies, including the World Bank, highlight interventions at the adolescent stage as key in breaking cycles of poverty and improving the overall quality of life of girls as they grow into adulthood.⁶

The following sections highlight the unique ways that GGG catalyzes empowerment for program participants, stakeholders, and communities by offering safe spaces for female solidarity, empowering girls to access government services and spurring community action. GGG has also laid the groundwork for significant long-term economic impact for girls and their families through vocational training, building social capital and delaying marriage. Overall, this analysis will emphasize specific observed successes to build on for the future of GGG.



Empowerment

INTRODUCTION TO THE GIRLS GAINING GROUND EMPOWERMENT MODEL

GGG aims to improve the lives of adolescent girls in Maharashtra through empowerment and education. Unquestionably, the empowerment component of GGG is the most powerful and unique aspect of this program. The empowerment process can dramatically transform the futures of GGG participants. As previously mentioned, empowerment is often “interpreted as the freedom of choice and action to shape one’s life, including the control over resources, decisions and institutions necessary to do so.”⁷ GGG encourages girls to create their own life paths.

*“There is an improvement
in the girls’ thinking...
[delaying marriage], etc...
It cannot happen in a day.
It will take some time.”*

As the program is less than two years old, and monitoring and evaluation methods continue to be both created and implemented, measuring the empowerment of girls remains a difficult task. Furthermore, quantifying an intangible process and these “freedoms” presents a number of challenges. As a Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) for Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in Thane aptly explained, “There is no proper document or proper evaluation used for measuring the impact. But in our general discussion with Aroehan, [an NGO partner that administers GGG], there is an improvement in the girls’ thinking... delaying the marriage, et cetera...It cannot happen in a day. It will take some time.”⁸

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



DR. ARMIDA FERNANDEZ

SNEHA, Mumbai

Dr. Fernandez started SNEHA as an intervention for the chronic health problems in the slums of Mumbai. Working in neonatology she observed, “the more I worked with newborn babies I realized

that, it’s not enough to try and save the life of that newborn, because what happens when that baby goes home?” After she observed the lack of resources available to mothers in the slums to take care of their sick infants, she started SNEHA to provide life-cycle care of women. “If you want healthy mothers you’ve got to go to the adolescent girls. If you want healthy adolescent girls, you’ve got to have a healthy childhood. If you want a healthy childhood, you need a healthy mother” and she says that is where GGG comes in.

Bhavishya Alliance and its local NGO partners place tremendous value on qualitative data and anecdotal evidence when interpreting GGG participants’ levels of empowerment. Enabling girls to be confident decision-makers within their homes and in society can best be identified through the articulation of transformations in thought and action. Consequently, analyzing qualitative data is essential to evaluating empowerment. Most partner NGOs and facilitators echo the sentiments of the CDPO above; empowerment is occurring through GGG and

is evidenced by the new ways in which GGG girls think, act, and make decisions.

FACILITATOR EMPOWERMENT

An unexpected and overwhelming feature of GGG’s empowerment efforts are demonstrated through the transformations of the program’s facilitators. As one facilitator from Thane summed up her experience, “I have entered a different world. I am doing something for my own village.”⁹ Almost universally among the three observed districts*, GGG facilitators expressed great pride in their roles, both as program instructors and as emerging leaders of their communities. Although many facilitators faced great obstacles in initial implementation of the program in their communities, most facilitators have now gained the respect not only of adolescent girls, but also of parents of program participants, pregnant women, and men in their communities. In many observed cases, the empowerment of the facilitators aided and enhanced the empowerment of the girls.

An empowered facilitator will pour her enthusiasm, knowledge and experience into many girls, thus empowering the community as a whole. The facilitator training

“I have entered a different world. I am doing something for my own village.”

* For further information regarding observed districts in Maharashtra, please see Appendix A.

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sessions held at the beginning of each GGG phase for facilitators gives these women new information concerning their own health, rights, and roles in their communities. Most commonly reported by the facilitators was new personal knowledge concerning menstruation and sex education. Many facilitators specifically highlighted the useful and effective resource, “How Babies Are Made,” a short book that details human reproduction in an approachable manner. Interviews repeatedly revealed ways in which facilitators had taken steps within their families and communities to pursue gender equality, inform family and friends of health education, and encourage proper nutrition. For example, Batti, a 23-year-old unmarried facilitator in Murambti village kept pictures and posters from GGG lessons on her front porch walls as lessons for the whole community. Although she had initial trepidation in teaching the curriculum, the knowledge she gained through GGG increased her confidence to be a strong role model to the GGG girls and in the community.

GIRLS GAINING GROUND EMPOWERS GIRLS BY PROVIDING A SAFE PLACE TO MEET

An invaluable component of GGG empowerment is the space it creates for girls to have respite and privacy with other girls. In one Nashik village populated by the low-caste Kotkari tribe, where education for girls is incomprehensible and marriage before the age of fourteen is almost certain, the program provides young women with a safe environment where they are able to laugh, share stories, and simply bond with one another. The majority of the girls from the Kotkari tribe work in the fields throughout the day and attend to domestic chores each evening. GGG meetings allow them to gather each week and build valuable relationships with other girls, expanding their social skills and networks. The Kotkari girls appeared comfortable in the GGG setting, whispering and giggling with one another. While some GGG topics may not link directly to their worldview and status, such as decision-making and universal gender equality, the girls are empowered through learning the biological cause of menstruation and bonding with other girls and their facilitator. The trust built within GGG groups creates female solidarity, a critical facet of the program’s empowerment process.

While the intimate structure of GGG sessions strengthens the female bonding process, each facilitator plays a crucial role in creating a safe and open space for her girls. GGG’s dedicated instructors have successfully gained the trust of their girls through the thoughtful building of these safe spaces for dialogue. One facilitator named Matura shared that while she only has one daughter, she now feels as though she has thirty-three daughters because of her connection and commitment to her GGG girls. Matura further mentioned that the girls in her GGG group discuss

personal and important life issues with her because the girls feel comfortable with her. Many facilitators relayed similar information regarding the cohesion of their GGG groups.

A number of girls and facilitators also reported that the connections created during GGG sessions combat a culture of silence that inhibits learning among women around topics such as menstruation, sexual and reproductive education, and dangers of early marriage. The unique relationship between girls and facilitators brings these topics into open discussion and further encourages girls to talk about these issues with other audiences. For example, in one interview it was reported that through GGG, “the girls have scientific knowledge. They are going back and sharing it with their mothers [and] communities.”¹⁰ At an Ashram school in Nashik, Anusaya, a dynamic 23-year-old facilitator, used the knowledge gained from GGG training to engage not only with her group, but also with the community as a whole. Anusaya proactively reached out to women in her community and worked to expose myths within her own family about females and menstruation. The GGG program and its facilitators have empowered girls and women to break traditional barriers and engage with other females in their communities.

GGG EMPOWERS GIRLS BY INCREASING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF PERSONAL HEALTH

[GGG] places a strong emphasis on...personal nutrition, anatomy and personal hygiene...to empower girls to make well-informed, personal health decisions...

From their birth and throughout their livelihood, many Indian girls are discriminated against and isolated because of their gender. The large gender gap in nutrition and health data highlights the strong gendered dimension of undernutrition in India. For example, women overall tend to be more anemic (a sign of poor nutrition) than men.

With this health data in mind, the GGG program places a strong emphasis on understanding personal nutrition, anatomy and personal hygiene in order to empower girls to make well-informed, personal health decisions and to pass this information on to their future children.

Improved Nutrition and Health for GGG Participants

Qualitative data provides an encouraging picture of the program’s effect on improving the nutrition and health of adolescent girls. GGG targets girls with the lowest nutritional status in the urban slums, as well as in the most remote areas of Maharashtra. Aroehan, an implementing NGO partner in Thane, works closely with ICDS to target children falling into the lowest malnutrition classifications and

figure 1: **NUTRITION DATA**

2005- 2006 National Family Health Survey (NFHS) by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Government of India, Fact sheet for Maharashtra

Percent of:	Urban	Rural	Mumbai
Children under 3 years who are stunted (too short for age)	34.8	40.3	39.8
Children under 3 years who are wasted (too thin for height)	13.4	15.6	14.1
Children under 3 years who are underweight (too thin for age)	34.5	43.5	40.1
Children age 6 to 35 months who are anemic	65.7	67.8	59.5
Ever-married women age 15-49 who are anemic	46.6	51.1	47.7
Ever-married men aged 15-49 who are anemic	15.6	16.8	10.3
Ever-married women age 15-49 whose Body Mass Index is below normal	20.7	43	15.4
Ever-married men age 15-49 whose Body Mass Index is below normal	17.3	31.8	15.4
Women age 20-24 married by age 18	28.9	48.9	24.0
Men age 25-29 married by age 21	9.3	18.2	6.7
Women age 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of survey	9.3	18.2	6.7
Married women with 2 living children wanting no more children	88.5	87.4	89.3
<i>*with two sons</i>	93.1	97.5	96.0
<i>*with one son, one daughter</i>	91.5	94.2	91.2
<i>* With two daughters</i>	69.2	36.5	71.8

the local Program Officer admits that “this kind of [targeted health] intervention is really needed.”¹² The GGG program encourages girls to eat a variety of grains, fruits and vegetables. VACHAN, an NGO partner, highlighted their efforts to ensure that a diversity of colorful foods are represented in each of their meals. Acknowledging the tribal regions’ poor access to some fruits and vegetables, VACHAN independently works to distribute seeds for community gardens in order to provide more nutritious food for families. Furthermore, the GGG facilitators ask girls to chart their daily food intake to ensure they are adequately nourished. Bhavishya Alliance provides food diaries to many of the GGG participants to assist in this effort. In cases where GGG participants were illiterate, facilitators completed the diaries through the girls’ dictation. Through discussions with both GGG participants and facilitators, it is clear that GGG participants have a heightened knowledge of the importance and sources of good nutrition.

In communities struggling to meet adequate nutritional needs, anemia is a concern, for which adolescent girls and mothers are at a significantly higher risk. Anemia is a major factor in a number of health problems, including premature and low birth weight babies, as well as maternal and neonatal deaths.¹³ Iron tablets are a simple and economical remedy for the condition, and the state of Maharashtra has encouraged iron tablet distribution to women and girls. The GGG health curriculum focuses on the dangers of anemia and the importance of iron in the diet. In Thane, GGG facilitators showed meticulous, hand-kept records charting improvements in hemoglobin levels for all girls participating in the local GGG group as a result of GGG’s focus on iron tablet distribution at local health posts. In another group, the girls and facilitators proudly charted and showed off their increased hemoglobin levels, achieved through regular taking of iron tablets. This group’s facilitator had herself made one of the biggest improvements in hemoglobin levels and encouraged the girls to live up to her example.

Unfortunately, some health centers have not been able to provide adequate follow-up testing or to provide the tablets, leaving the participants at a higher risk for health complications. In those communities where the testing and tablets are available, more girls have seen a positive change in their health.

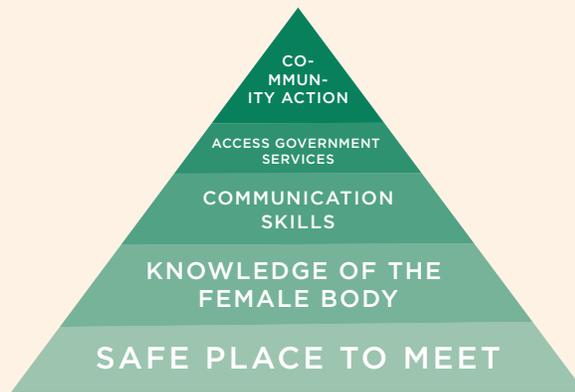
Knowledge of the Female Body

The menstrual cycle and body mapping lessons were consistently mentioned as the most popular and important topics among the GGG participants. The majority of interviewed girls noted that they did not have any prior knowledge or understanding of the monthly process of menstruation or female anatomy. Some participants

mentioned that menstruation had been discussed in their homes, but had been identified as an “evil” or “dirty” condition.¹⁴ Understanding anatomy heightens self-awareness and the girls are empowered by knowing that the changes in their bodies during adolescence are normal and that menses is a natural, universal process. These lessons are integral to the GGG curriculum and further the goal of female empowerment.

figure 2: **EMPOWERMENT STEPS**

GGG provides all participants with a basic form of empowerment regardless of their background. For some girls, this form is built on to higher levels of empowerment, the most advanced being community action.



Improved Hygiene

Although empowerment is traditionally viewed as an internal process, some physical indicators also exist. The teaching staff at the Ashram School in Nashik noted that empowerment was evident through the improvement in the girls’ hygiene and through the manner in which the girls present themselves. These observations were frequently mentioned by facilitators and community members. Instructors shared that the girls make greater efforts to wear clean clothes and have made personal grooming and hygiene newfound priorities. Pride and focus on appearance is a physical, visual indicator of empowerment. One GGG participant from the Thane district summarized some of her GGG knowledge noting that, “GGG teaches us how to make decisions about our own rights, maintain cleanliness, and communicate with others.”¹⁵

GGG EMPOWERS GIRLS BY GIVING THEM THE TOOLS TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The GGG curriculum is supported by relationships with the Integrated Child Development Service and the Ministry of Health, which both have targeted programs, or schemes, for poor, tribal populations. GGG facilitators and health clinic staff routinely reported that girls in the program had a greater awareness of available government services and were willing to avail themselves to these services. Interviews in the field revealed the importance of the links between government partnerships and the GGG curriculum, these links are essential to achieving the overall empowerment and health goals of the program.

[Interviews] revealed the importance of the links between government partnerships and the GGG curriculum... essential to achieving the overall empowerment and health goals of the program.

In Mumbai, girls participating in SNEHA's (an NGO partner implementing the GGG program in Mumbai) GGG groups launched a community awareness campaign for the government's "Safe Motherhood" project that offers women a stipend for hospital deliveries. This was one of the most clear-cut cases of the interconnectivity of the GGG empowerment curriculum with government services and overall health awareness. In Thane, the district head of ICDS described the GGG implementing organization, Aroehan, as a "friend" who had made it a personal priority to address child malnutrition in their communities. These exemplify some of the best aspects of GGG's integration with government services.

Further, the GGG curriculum also works to dispel myths surrounding pharmaceuticals and medicines dispensed by the government. In some communities, facilitators reported a popularly held myth that the iron tablets were in fact birth control pills. In this case, mothers initially refused to let their daughters take the iron tablets. GGG dispels these dangerous myths.

GGG helps to empower the girls and the community by exposing gaps in services that may otherwise have not been addressed. Community mapping exercises play a pivotal role in carrying out this portion of the GGG curriculum. During this exercise, the girls learn which services and facilities they can avail themselves to in the community and identify other types of services that they would like to have access to in the future. Girls frequently identify schools and health facilities as crucial services for their community. In one community in the Nashik region, the health post worker had not visited the community in over a year and the health post itself was unable to supply chlorine tablets, leading to unsafe water and associated health risks. As the girls and their community were aware that the government was supposed to be providing the services, community members complained to government officials.

GGG EMPOWERS GIRLS BY ENCOURAGING THEM TO TAKE COMMUNITY ACTION

Empowerment through GGG also leads to community action. Many GGG participants became active community members as they were empowered through the GGG curriculum. The girls use the safe space for female interaction provided by GGG, the passion of their facilitators, the knowledge gained about their bodies and rights to government services, to actively involve themselves within their communities.

In Kiroli Village, a group of girls in GGG's program facilitated by the NGO partner, SNEHA, were able to bring an undocumented child abuse case to the attention of local police. The girls worked together to photograph the abuse taking place and approached the police to demand action. These girls highlighted their favorite GGG topics as human rights and legal services.

As mentioned earlier, in Mumbai, girls participating in SNEHA's GGG groups launched an awareness campaign in their communities of the government's "Safe

Motherhood" scheme.

With assistance from their facilitators, the girls planned a rally, created posters and walked through their community chanting slogans and informing the public of the government scheme.

In the district of Thane, participants from Shirve Pimpalpada constructed community dustbins in an effort to reduce pollution in their village. They had identified pollution and littering as a pervasive problem in the community, discussed the issue in the safe space provided by GGG and took action on the issue after a number of GGG lessons highlighted communication

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



LATA

GGG Facilitator, Mumbai

The research team had the privilege to meet Lata during our work with SNEHA in the N Ward of Mumbai. Lata is a GGG facilitator and her commitment to empowering young girls and being a voice for change in the community was pal-

pable. Lata and her fellow facilitators initially faced resistance when setting up a GGG program, enduring taunts and threats of violence, but her commitment was unwavering. In addition to giving up evenings and Sundays for GGG, Lata also works in a local Anganwadi Center. Although small in stature, this brave young mother personified the leadership, charisma and strength common in many of the GGG facilitators. Without these women and their strong linkages to the adolescent girls and their communities, the curriculum would not be as effective. Bhavishya Alliance and its partner NGOs who implement the GGG training are fortunate to have a cadre of women like Lata to inspire the girls of GGG.

and decision-making skills. Another group of GGG girls working with Aroehan called for a month-long ban on alcohol sales, as they had identified substance abuse as a persistent issue in their community. This community venture involved the girls appearing before the local panchayat council to discuss the ban. Without GGG's sessions on communication and community involvement, it is unlikely that the girls would have had the courage and sense of empowerment to take on this important community issue.

GGG allows young women to realize that they can be vocal and prominent stakeholders in their communities. Girls learn that their voices can be heard and that they are powerful advocates for change. Said one Mumbai resident of joining GGG, "It will help me in the future and I can help other women."¹⁶



Economic Impact

INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GGG

As in many countries, adolescent girls in India face extraordinary challenges in achieving economic independence from the very moment of their birth, throughout childhood, adolescence, marriage and motherhood. Economic dependence leads to a number of problems for women. For example, when girls are not economically independent as married women, they are more likely to experience domestic violence and sexual coercion; in fact, one major reason women have sex with which they are uncomfortable, is due to fear of loss of economic support.¹⁷ Social norms, lack of education, early marriage practices, a variety of health factors and a lack of marketable skills, mean that many Indian girls are never able to achieve any measure of economic independence. Girls are often treated as less valuable household members when household investment decisions are made, which can be credited to the marriage tradition of girls leaving their natal homes to move in with their husband's family.

At the macro level, the lack of investment in girls has affected the Indian economy adversely. For instance, the United Nations Foundation has reported that adolescent pregnancy in India results in nearly \$100 billion in lost potential income for these

girls.¹⁸ Numerous studies completed by the World Bank and World Economic Forum, identify that investment in girls' education and empowerment is one of the best ways to eradicate overall poverty. However, necessary investment toward girls is often blocked by social norms at both micro and macro levels.

According to many research institutions, investing in girls has a powerful effect on poverty in families and communities. Economically empowered women can improve not only their lives but the lives of their families and communities. Women are likely to invest approximately 90% of their income into their families; men, on the other hand, are likely to invest only 30 to 40% of earnings into their families.¹⁹

GGG is at too early a stage of growth to be evaluated through an economic assessment of scientific rigor, but qualitative assessments of potential economic impacts from GGG can be identified. The GGG program over time may (1) provide vocational training to improve the economic conditions of the girls themselves and their communities, (2) fill a gap for girls with limited social networks to use for economic empowerment, and (3) increase the age of marriage.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Interviews with participants in the Girls Gaining Ground program identified vocational skills training as a critical piece for inclusion in the GGG curriculum. In order to achieve a long-term, sustainable economic impact on the girls and their communities, explicit vocational and business trainings should be integrated into the GGG curriculum. Bhavishya Alliance has taken initial steps to address this need and has partnered with an outside agency to conduct an assessment of the trainings and skills that most interest the girls. In the summer of 2009, the organization Ants and Partners conducted a sample survey of nearly 900 participants in GGG, assessing their inclination for vocational training and evaluating the types of skills that would be most practical and beneficial to the community. This assessment took into consideration the environment in which the girls lived, including the community's existing businesses, access to commercial inputs and willingness of the girls to migrate for non-agricultural work.

As part of the community mapping exercise in the GGG curriculum, girls could identify where more teachers, nurses and tailors are needed in their community to assist the girls in the initial steps of identifying potential jobs.

The survey found that many girls commonly reported teaching, nursing and tailoring as their ideal jobs. Teaching, nursing and tailoring are roles and occupations that meet existing community needs and are adaptable to the demands and restrictions placed on women in the communities. As part of the community mapping exercise in the GGG curriculum, girls could identify where more teachers, nurses and tailors

are needed in their community to assist the girls in the initial steps of identifying potential jobs. It is also possible that these desires could open an area for government partnership to assist GGG in training girls to fill needed openings in local health posts and schools, especially in rural areas.

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



ANUSAYA

Boripada Ashram School
Facilitator, Nashik

Although Anusaya's tenure as a GGG facilitator has been limited to only eight months, her impact with the GGG girls at the Boripada Ashram School has been immense. Her enthusiasm for the GGG

curriculum is palpable as she enhances the curriculum with songs, dances and games to illustrate important concepts. She emphasizes that her facilitator training experience with VACHAN was excellent and she wants to pass this experience of community and inclusion onto the GGG girls. She is an exemplary role model and works to combat gender inequality not only with her GGG participants but within her daily life as well. For example, her husband assists with gathering water, traditionally a woman's job and she has challenged the assumption of menstruation as an unclean problem with her sister-in-law.

The vocational training needs assessment focused on the need to devise two training tracks for vocational studies, one track for urban girls, and a separate track for rural girls. This augments observed differences between urban and rural GGG participants. Girls in rural areas were more open to migrating beyond their community for work, but were also open to establishing their own microenterprises within the community. Given that 95% of the communities surveyed had no commercial vendors, this could prove to be an immediate source of economic growth not only for the GGG participants, but

also for the community as a whole. In identifying teaching and tailoring as ideal jobs, GGG participants were mirroring role models in their own lives. For example, in the Murambti village, Batti, a GGG facilitator, had completed a dressmaking workshop, and the girls in her GGG group were eager to follow her lead and complete a similar course. This particular example highlights the influential bond between GGG participants and their group leader.

Ants and Partners identified an "economic development program" as an essential component of any type of financial empowerment and vocational training scheme for adolescent girls. This type of program would be a natural addition to the GGG curriculum which already includes lessons in communication and negotiation. Basic financial literacy would also be an essential component to the amended curriculum and would support more intensive vocational training. Interviews with girls in

Rawtmal Village in Nashik revealed that most girls give all their wages to their parents, and thus have very little understanding of money or finances. Integrating vocational skills and microenterprise training into the GGG curriculum will increase the financial empowerment of GGG participants.

The financial and vocational training must be implemented in a manner that is beneficial to the girls and their communities, supported by funding from Bhavishya Alliance and their partners. GGG is already committed to linking girls with existing government structures and has developed strong relationships with corporate partners. Government and private partners would be ideal sources of funding and expertise for this type of vocational training and would have existing institutional structures for Bhavishya Alliance to draw on to execute the training.

Increasing the presence of women in India's economy can have a positive economic impact as one study finds that "if the ratio of female to male workers in India increased by just 10%, the country's GDP would increase by 8%."²⁰ Adding women to India's economy can also dramatically improve the lives of these women and their families. Economic activity of young women in vocational training programs or microcredit enterprises increases "household per capita consumption expenditure and reduces their fertility."²¹ Vocational training will certainly contribute to the economic empowerment of GGG participants.

BUILDING SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SKILLS

One major challenge in involving young women in economic activity is their lack of access to social networks. In the developing world, girls are often kept at home until marriage, in which case their social networks are primarily restricted to their immediate household. Social customs and norms can restrict movement of girls and women, as well as restrict occupations available to them. Furthermore, this isolation tends to enhance economic dependence on men.²² Some research suggests that "young women may have less access to broad social networks to aid in job search and consequently less information with which to make a good decision on sector and occupation."²³ GGG creates safe spaces for girls which begins the process of building social networks outside of the home for girls who may otherwise live in isolation. Some GGG groups made group visits to places of economic activity, such as a cashew factory, thus broadening the girls' knowledge of economic opportunities.

Furthermore, GGG encourages girls to become vocal participants in their community, which can also assist them in developing interaction skills useful to economic activity.

An Aroehan staff member Shraddha Shringarpure explained, “The girls have become more vocal through GGG; they are no longer shy. Girls now express what they like and don’t like, what they want and don’t want.”²⁴ Many facilitators from each district reported that girls were often timid and looked down without making eye contact during the initial GGG sessions. These facilitators indicated that girls grew more confident in their communication skills after completing the GGG curriculum. The instructors from Aroehan’s programs believe their girls have bloomed after participating in GGG.

Anecdotal evidence of growth in the decision-making process was abundant across GGG groups. Furthermore, participants expressed confidence in communication skills not only within their sessions, but also within their homes. Some girls shared that they had overcome shyness with their parents, speaking out about inequalities in the distribution of food and household chores between male and female siblings. The development of these social skills as well as expanding the social networks of girls through GGG’s safe spaces will lead to economic empowerment especially as they learn new skills through vocational training.

DISCOURAGING EARLY MARRIAGE

Early marriage has a well-understood and researched negative effect on girls and the countries in which they live. Early marriage almost always prevents girls’ education, preventing any chance for financial independence through skilled labor.²⁵ This fact was very evident, especially during interviews with GGG facilitators. In one case, a facilitator at the Ashram School was prevented by her in-laws from continuing her education and becoming a teacher. Luckily, the facilitator was able to use her position as a GGG facilitator to substitute for her dream of becoming a teacher.

Research has also shown that young, married girls are “least likely to benefit from educational and economic policies and programs...”

Research has also shown that young, married girls are “least likely to benefit from educational and economic policies and programs...”²⁶ Although young married girls may work in the informal economic sector, doing menial labor or home-based work, early marriage prevents them from reaching their full economic productive value to society. For example, Human Development Index (HDI) indicators show a negative relationship between national development and early marriage rates.²⁷ Marriage is especially a social and cultural focus for many adolescent girls, with research suggesting that in many ethnic and religious groups, marriage and children are the only way that young girls and women can create an identity and status in the household.²⁸ This central identity of a woman as a wife and mother can prevent girls from achieving their full social and economic potential forcing them to sacrifice friendships, education, athletic opportunities and other typical experiences that

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



BORIPADA ASHRAM SCHOOL

Nashik

This Ashram School hosts three GGG facilitators for 140 GGG participants. The facilitators have made clear inroads in girls' empowerment within the school,

and the importance of the GGG program was highlighted by male teachers at the school. The teachers focus on the importance of these types of programs for both girls and boys in rural areas and highlight the role of GGG in informing girls about available government services. The teachers, many from outside of the tribal area, note that the Indian government has many facilities for tribal people but in order to avail the facilities, the girls need a minimum level of education, which GGG can provide. The teachers also clearly notice the positive effect of GGG after participating girls began speaking out in class. As one male teacher explains, "These kinds of programs...definitely will make a difference in this community because adolescent girls are potential mothers, so...whatever they learn, this knowledge and information will be passed onto future generations, so whatever problems [the girls] face in their lives, the future generation won't face these [problems]."³³

adolescent boys often enjoy. Research has shown that providing economic opportunities to girls can prevent early marriage,²⁹ which in turn can lead to preventing other early marriage related problems such as health problems and low levels of education.

GGG directly attempts to halt early marriage by informing the girls of their rights to marry after the age of eighteen in accordance with Indian laws and the negative psychological and physical health effects of early marriage. One Angawadi Center worker in Gavatha Village noted that one of the best parts of GGG is that the program encourages girls to delay marriage so "if [a girl's] parents are planning

her marriage she can go and tell her parents she doesn't want to get married before eighteen."³⁰ It was evident that the girls understood the message of the dangers of early marriage. One group of GGG participants in Thane even re-enacted a play in which a girl who is married too young dies along with her child during childbirth. Facilitators, GGG participants, and government employees all highlighted the importance of GGG's message on preventing early marriage.

"If [a girl's] parents are planning her marriage she can go and tell her parents she doesn't want to get married before eighteen."

It is clear that GGG has an important role to play in increasing the economic empowerment of adolescent girls. Through GGG's incorporation of vocational training, expanding girls' social networks and working to end the practice of early marriage, GGG contributes to the girls' future economic independence and empowerment. As girls and women who can achieve some measure of economic independence in the future, GGG participants can empower themselves, and help their household and community.



Ideas to Build On

Bhavishya Alliance has created a program with a number of unique strengths on which to build for future adolescent girls' programs and in the expansion of GGG. Bhavishya Alliance can utilize the many assets of the GGG program structure and curriculum to further enhance GGG through standardized procedures. By streamlining and defining ways that the program can strengthen its current advantages, GGG will grow as an influential change maker in Maharashtra and beyond.

CRITERIA FOR FACILITATORS

One of GGG's greatest strengths is in the caliber of the program facilitators that the implementing NGO partners choose and train to teach the GGG curriculum. These women connect GGG to the community, build rapport among the girls' groups and encourage initiative in community action. Bhavishya Alliance would further benefit by distributing normalized criteria for facilitator selection and creating more detailed expectations of the facilitators. All facilitators should continue to receive the honorariums in conjunction with contractual work agreements that inform them of the length of their assignment. By standardizing this process, GGG and Bhavishya

Alliance will play an active role in empowering women and fostering gender equality in employment as an example to the community.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

Another way to advance the GGG program can be achieved by recognizing the achievements of GGG girls and facilitators in a formal manner, increasing the validity and familiarity of the program within the community. Aroehan held award ceremonies for successful facilitators and publicly recognized the strides made by the GGG groups. This garnered community support and created incentives for facilitators to be dedicated and committed to their work. Recognizing the work of facilitators and the community action of GGG groups could become norms of the GGG program, drawing in social networks of the local village and raising awareness for GGG achievements.

CURRICULUM SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

The breadth and depth of GGG curriculum is a driving force for the widespread success of the program. Overwhelmingly, participants, parents, and facilitators expressed satisfaction with the material covered by the GGG program. However, in some cases the traditional Marathi used in the GGG guides was “too difficult” especially in the sessions covering technical anatomical language. The proactive facilitators met this challenge by utilizing dance and song, incorporated in other areas of the curriculum, and outside resources supplying pictures to keep the girls engaged. Bhavishya Alliance can build on this strength of the curriculum, standardizing the use of culturally relevant stories and songs that relate to unique geographical locations. Facilitators also found that weaving local myths and traditions into the lessons aided the girls in understanding GGG material. During their training, facilitators should be encouraged to utilize local examples to supplement the GGG curriculum.

INCREASING PROGRAM SCOPE WITH BOYS

GGG is instigating positive change in girls’ mindsets through education and through the encouragement of community involvement. As girls begin to embrace the freedoms of which they were not formerly aware, it exposes the need to broaden the scope of empowerment and gender equality. Girls’ empowerment in isolation cannot change a patriarchal society. As GGG girls mature, marry, and raise children of their own, true generational change will be further catalyzed by engaging the boys who will

PROFILES IN EMPOWERMENT



MILAN & NIDHI

GGG Participants, Mumbai

Milan and Nidhi are two GGG participants in a group of GGG girls in Mumbai. Milan, 18, wants to be an engineer and highlighted her favorite section of the GGG lessons on legal rights of children and human rights. Nidhi, also 18, wants to get her

Bachelor's degree and continue her education. The girls in this GGG group focused on legal rights of men and women in India and human rights in a broader, global context. Milan and Nidhi were part of a GGG coalition of girls who uncovered a local child abuse case, took pictures of the abuse and reported the matter to the police. After the police arrested the abuser and moved the child to safety, the girls realized how the GGG curriculum has empowered them to bring change to their communities.

one day be their husbands. In the process of empowering girls, GGG exposes the need to educate boys about the complexities and difficulties of life as a woman in India. Boys have demonstrated interest in, and curiosity about the GGG curriculum and girls' groups. This was evident at several GGG groups where young boys in the community occasionally attend sessions, arranging themselves on the periphery of group meetings.

Research demonstrates that empowerment programs like GGG should begin when

girls and boys are young and “values and attitudes that shape identities as women and men are being formed.”³¹ In the same way that GGG is leading generational change for girls to affect their future families and the way of life for the women of India, it reveals a need for parallel education of boys through different means. Just as female facilitators provide positive role models of articulate, educated women, engaging boys through positive models of male behavior could compound the community change that is already occurring through GGG girls' empowerment.

MICROFINANCE AND ASSET BUILDING

Increasing the presence of women in India's economy can dramatically improve the lives of Indian women and their children. As Bhavishya Alliance has already taken initial steps to address the girls' need to receive vocational skills training, a next step should be some kind of asset transfer mechanism and financial literacy training, as both are critical to the economic development of the girls.

As noted in the Ants and Partners' report, girls in rural areas were often open to establishing their own microenterprises within their communities. To provide the necessary skills for girls and young women interested in opening and managing

microenterprises in their communities, Bhavishya Alliance could partner with local microfinance organizations to provide training to build a solid foundation for confident, empowered and well-informed female entrepreneurs. Basic financial literacy would be an essential component to the amended curriculum and could support more intensive vocational training.

The financial and vocational training must be implemented in a manner that is beneficial and relevant to the girls and their communities.

Given that 95% of the communities surveyed by the Ants and Partners had no small shops in their communities, this could prove to be an immediate source of economic growth not only for the GGG participants, but also for the community as a whole. Also, research studies have determined that borrowing by women is positively associated with “self-reported measures of empowerment.”³² Integrating vocational and financial skills and microenterprise training into the GGG curriculum by partnering with local microfinance institutions will increase the financial empowerment of GGG participants. The challenge to be acknowledged is that the financial and vocational training must be implemented in a manner that is beneficial and relevant to the girls and their communities, supported by funding from Bhavishya Alliance and their partners.



Conclusion

Adolescent girls often lag behind their male counterparts in empowerment. They lack a voice within their communities, face cycles of poor health and undernutrition, and fail to develop valuable economic skills. Without an intervention like the GGG program, with structured learning, community participation and mentoring and socializing opportunities, the isolated adolescent girls in Maharashtra, as well as their future children may be destined to remain in a cycle of poverty, undernutrition, and gender discrimination in their households and communities. Bhavishya Alliance's GGG program has altered these girls' circumstances. By intervening at the crucial stage of adolescence, GGG is empowering the girls with a wide range of skills which will be useful throughout their lives and for transforming future generations.

The GGG program is creating strong economic and social potential among adolescent girls in urban slums and rural communities in Maharashtra. Investing in adolescent girls is exactly the vehicle needed for underprivileged communities in order to eradicate intergenerational poverty and undernutrition. This is not an issue for only adolescent girls. Investing in girls is not only important in view of girls' rights to empowerment, but also a wise economic decision. By including adolescent girls in economic development, it is likely that India will see increased economic growth and success.

The GGG program is a first and remarkable step for Indian girls to be empowered in their health decisions, communication skills, and self-awareness. This significant program provides a way to eliminate the cycle of intergenerational poverty and undernutrition, as well as an opportunity to increase the economic strength of women and communities all through a focus on adolescent girls.

APPENDIX A:

Data Compilation and Methodology

The New York University Capstone evaluation team completed field visits to Mumbai, Nashik, and Thane, which took place from July 8, 2009 to July 28, 2009. During these field visits the Capstone team worked with three of the twelve NGO partners that are implementing the GGG program at the local level.[†] The field visits were arranged by Bhavishya Alliance staff in coordination with NGO partner staff in each area. The evaluators interviewed various GGG stakeholders, including: participants of the program, parents of the participants, facilitators, government officials, NGO partner staff, and Bhavishya Alliance staff.

EVALUATION LOCATIONS

Interviews were conducted with Bhavishya Alliance staff at their headquarters in Vashi, Mumbai. Further interviews and focus groups were held in the N-Ward of Mumbai with NGO partner, SNEHA, in rural areas near Nashik with NGO partner, VACHAN, and in rural areas near Thane with NGO partner Aroehan. The evaluation team visited Gavantha, Rawtmal, Borichi Vadi, and Boripada, all villages or hamlets near Nashik. Additional visits were made to villages or hamlets in the Thane region, including Barpada, Kharwal, and Murambti. Interviews were also conducted with NGO partner staff at headquarters in Mumbai, Nashik, and Thane.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

The primary instrument[‡] used to conduct this qualitative evaluation was group interviews along with individual interviews conducted when necessary and possible. Group interviews utilized the cultural dynamic that GGG creates, engaging communities of girls to learn together and depend on one another.

[†] The evaluators were originally slated to visit a fourth section of GGG organized under BAIF, a local NGO partner in Thane, India. Inclement weather related to monsoon season caused flooding, making field visits impossible. While the team was able to meet with some BAIF staff members, the access to information was limited. Therefore, the evaluation team chose not to include BAIF in this evaluation.

[‡] Please see Appendix B for detailed examples of questions used in these interviews.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

GGG girl participants were interviewed along with program facilitators, participants' parents, partner NGO staff, AWC workers, health center workers, and government representatives. All study participants of interviews were informed of the purpose of the interview and the way in which the interview would be used to quantitatively evaluate the GGG program.

DATA COLLECTION

Methods of data collection included the use of interpreters, translating between Marathi and English. At other times, interviewees who were English speakers were interviewed in English without an interpreter. The interviews were digitally recorded for accuracy.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

The following interview questions were used as a basis for questions during interviews conducted by the NYU Capstone Team.

GGG PARTICIPANTS

- How long have you been participating in the program?
- What is your favorite thing about GGG?
- Do you have a job or make money? Who decides how you spend your earnings? What are your earnings spent on?
- How has the program affected your life at home? Have you talked to your siblings and parents about what you've learned?
- What information that you've learned will you share with your children when you have them?
- What do you want to do when you grow up? How will you do that?
- At what age do you want to get married? How would you talk to your parents about your desires to get married at that age? What would they think?
- How important is it for girls to go to school? Will you send your daughters to school?

BHAVISHYA STAFF

- What success/challenges have you seen in the GGG program?
- How do you measure empowerment?
- What successes/challenges have you seen in managing the Alliance over such a large and diverse area?
- How has the project change or evolved since it began?
- How have multi-sector partnerships helped the program?

NGO PARTNER STAFF

- What success/challenges have you seen in the GGG program?
- What has been the positive impact on the greater community?
- How have the girls responded to the GGG program?
- How do you measure empowerment?
- What are the limitations of the GGG program?

FACILITATORS

- How have the girls responded to the GGG program?
- Can you tell us about a time you saw a girl change because of the program?
- What is your favorite topic in GGG?
- Did you know the information covered in the GGG curriculum before you were trained?
- What are the limitations of the GGG program? Do you have the adequate resources to carry out the program?

PARENTS

- What have your daughters told you about the GGG program?
- What difference have you seen in your daughter since she's been in the program?
- What are your aspirations for your daughter?

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- How do you think empowering girls can contribute to the overall economic well being of the country/region?
- How have multi-sector partnerships benefitted this program?

APPENDIX C

Biographies

BHAVISHYA ALLIANCE

K.S. MURTHY

K. S. Murthy joined Bhavishya Alliance on 10th December '07 as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bhavishya Alliance.

He is a graduate in Dairy Technology from National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal (1984-88) and holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Management from the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (1989-91).

Mr. K. S. Murthy has more than 17 years of experience as a social entrepreneur and social development professional. During these years he carried out many assignments as a freelance consultant in areas of public health, family welfare, child nutrition, primary education, water and sanitation supported by The World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, DFID, among others, in Asia and Africa. Before joining Bhavishya Alliance he worked as CEO Brooke India. Prior to that he worked as Lead Procurement Specialist (Asia) for United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and carried out Assessments for Global Fund to Fight AIDS TB and Malaria (GFATM) in China, East Timor, Mongolia and India.

NEERA KEWALRAMANI

Dr. (Mrs) Neera Kewalramani joined Bhavishya Alliance through UNICEF, Maharashtra, as Chief, Programs in November 2008. Dr. Kewalramani is a Medical Post Graduate along with a Diploma in Public Health, and has a Post Graduate certificate in Health & Family Welfare Management.

Before joining Bhavishya Alliance, Dr. Kewalramani worked with Public Health Department of Mumbai Municipal Corporation (since 1981) in various positions with various portfolios, viz expanded programme of immunisation, RCH, IEC, RNTCP, Biomedical Waste Management systems, Human Resource development, Public health Administration and MIS with her last position being Deputy Executive Health Officer (Epidemiology). She has also been a trainer and resource person/guest faculty on Public Health and Environmental Sciences at various institutions such as VJTI, IIT Bombay, TISS, and AILSG etc.

NYU CAPSTONE TEAM

AMBER BAKER

Amber Baker is a Master of Public Administration candidate at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University, expecting graduation in May 2010. Amber has done significant work in women's issues as the Women and Girls Resource Group Research Intern for The Synergos Institute, contributing to U.N. advocacy on issues related to women in poverty at UNANIMA International, and working in development for the National Domestic Violence Hotline. She has further demonstrated a commitment to advocacy for women in the developing world as the 2009-2010 Chair of the Wagner Women's Caucus. Amber is eager to use her nonprofit experience and international policy focus to create innovative change through NGOs. Her background includes a year spent working in Moscow, Russia and a BA from the University of Oklahoma with a double major in Political Science and History.

MUTSUMI NAKAGAMI

Mutsumi Nakagami is a candidate of Master of Public Administration (International Policy & Management) at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and has a background in both the private and public sectors. Before coming to Wagner, Mutsumi held a marketing position at a publicly traded Japanese cosmetic company and during weekends, volunteered at several community-based organizations. Later, she decided to pursue her career in public service and started an internship at the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. Last summer, Mutsumi studied at Ghandhigram Rural University in Tamil Nadu, India and received participatory rural development training. Mutsumi recently interned at Regional Bureau for Africa of United Nations Development Programme and went on a mission to assist implementation of Africa-Asia Business Forum V in Uganda. She is a steering committee member of UN Forum, a platform for Japanese people to gain knowledge and exchanges ideas about UN-related issues, which has approximately 3500 members around the globe.

TARA NORONHA

Tara Noronha is a Master of Public Administration candidate with an International specialization at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. After receiving a B.A. in 2002 from the University of Notre Dame, she spent several years working for Chicago magazine. In 2005, she spent six months volunteering with child advocacy organizations in South India. Upon returning to the U.S., Tara worked as a Senior Development Officer for Children's Memorial Foundation in Chicago, raising funds for the non-profit pediatric hospital and working towards an \$800M capital campaign. After two and a half years in this position, Tara moved to New York City to pursue studies at NYU Wagner. She currently serves as the Academic Advisory Chair of the International Public Service Association at Wagner. Since beginning her graduate studies, she has worked for the New York City Charter Center and Mercy Corps.

KATHERINE POTASKI

Katherine Potaski is an experienced international affairs professional with a solid background in fund raising and research. She is currently an intern at the Synergos Institute while completing her Master's in Public Administration at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Most recently, Katherine worked with The Hunger Project, a U.S.-based NGO, where, as Associate Director for International Fund Raising, she oversaw more than \$5.5 million raised internationally. In this position she managed one-on-one relationships with nine fundraising countries and oversaw the design and implementation of a global fund raising strategy, producing weekly financial and programmatic reports for the CEO and Board of Directors. Katherine began her fund raising career in administration, moving successively through support positions to creating a new position in the organization to the oversight of international fundraising. Through this trajectory she gained extensive experience in event planning, online marketing, prospect research and proposal development for individual, institutional, government and corporate donors.

EMILY PUCKART

Emily Puckart has worked in Romania as a Peace Corps volunteer with a focus on institutional development. She collaborated primarily with Save the Children Hunedoara on girls' and women's programs. She also served as President of the Gender and Development Board in Romania and oversaw the development of a number of programs with focuses on women's health, domestic violence and girls' empowerment. Before attending graduate school, Emily worked at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Washington D.C. with Women's Political Participation Programs where she focused on programs in Eastern Europe and Africa.

Emily earned a B.A. in International Affairs and Russian and East European studies at the University of Virginia. She is currently a candidate for a Masters in Public Administration with an international specialization at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University.

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