GIRLS

LE AD

PUTTING GIRLS AT THE CENTER

GIRLS ADVISORY COUNCIL

EMpower

Enriching young lives in emerging markets

EMpower
GIRLS ADVISORY COUNCIL

PUTTING GIRLS AT THE CENTER

WHAT IS THE GIRLS ADVISORY COUNCIL?

The Girls Advisory Council (GAC) is an EMpower initiative, launched in 2018, which puts girls at the center of our work in India. The Council is comprised of a group of adolescent girl leaders who advise on EMpower's grantmaking strategy in India and how to best meet the needs of adolescent girls.

EMpower believes girls can be – and should be – seen as experts on their own lives, capable of directing and leading change. The Girls Advisory Council puts this belief into practice.

EMpower invited each of our adolescent girl-focused grantee partner organizations in India - from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh - to nominate one girl representative to participate. These 16 adolescent girl Council members now advise how to create opportunities for adolescent girls in India, address barriers that prevent them from accessing or participating in programs, and increase girls' chances of success.

The girl Council members' recommendations will help shape EMpower's grantmaking strategy for India in 2019 – 2021.

With the launch of the Girls Advisory Council, EMpower's long-standing commitment to empowering at-risk adolescent girls in India has taken a leap forward.
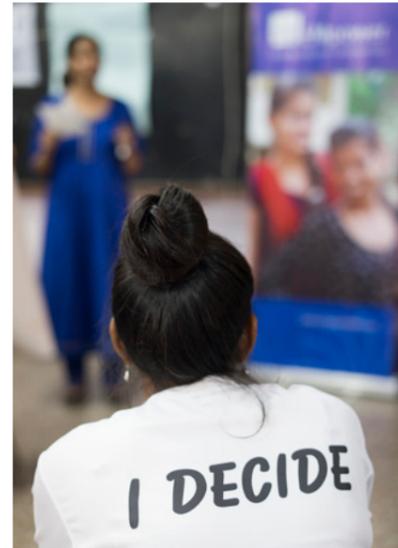
Do you know what kind of education adolescent girls want in India? How safe they feel?... Let's listen to what they have to say. IT'S TIME TO HAND THE MIC OVER TO GIRLS.

Girls in India have a lot to say. AT EMPOWER, WE'RE LISTENING.

THE BIG PICTURE

The United Nations' 'Sustainable Development Agenda 2030' Goal #5 is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." In addition, it calls for full participation and equal opportunities for women at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Unfortunately, this goal is far from reality for many women and girls in India today.

India has the largest population of adolescent girls in the world. However, due to traditional norms and gender-based discrimination, many of these girls are not able to make decisions about their futures. They face barriers to reaching their full potential, including early marriage, lack of access to education and restricted job opportunities.

According to UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2017, 30% of female adolescents aged 10-19 years old in India are currently married, and nearly a quarter of girls have given birth by age 18. Only 64% of girls are enrolled in upper secondary school, and women constitute just 27% of India's labor force.

These challenges highlight the importance of strategic investment in adolescent girls. By increasing the relevance and effectiveness of programming, adolescent girls will be empowered with resources, agency and improved access to opportunity. With these, adolescent girls have the potential to create incredible change in themselves, their communities and India.

A 2018 baseline report of the Sustainable Development Goal Index places India in the "Aspirant" category for gender equality – the lowest of four categories in which a country can place.

HOW THE GAC MOVES THE NEEDLE

Who better to direct the focus of programs working towards transformative change, than those whose lives will be transformed?

The Girls Advisory Council is rooted in EMpower's dedication to pushing forward the best practices and innovation in grantmaking. We recognize that to fully address girls' needs, strategies to empower girls need to be informed by those whose lives are affected every day - the girls themselves. This is why we are centering our work around their expertise.

And, we are not only listening – we are taking action to implement their ideas. Through the GAC, we are involving girls as key actors in decision-making, investing funds to bring their ideas to fruition, and piloting and testing the results.

A series of feedback loops allows for the perspectives of adolescent girls in India to be taken into account and then acted upon. Through monitoring and evaluation, the ideas can be refined and integrated into ongoing strategic planning.

EMpower's embrace of "participatory philanthropy" is not only important to help shape more effective programs, but also because we believe deeply in the paradigm of beneficiaries as agents of change.

This collaborative approach involves each of our grantee partners in India, influencing both EMpower's country strategy and our partners' programs.

HELLO, WORLD!

EMpower is proud to introduce you to the girl leaders driving our grantmaking strategy in India. Meet the inaugural Girls Advisory Council!

My personal goal is to become an income tax officer.

There are girls whose parents place restrictions on their education. I want those girls to be able to pursue education on their own terms.

POOJA, Ibtada ❀
Age 18, Kerwa Jaat, Alwar

My personal goal is to complete my education.

I would like to change the perspective of my society members who have a conservative outlook towards women. Girls are teased and harassed, and I would want that to stop. Addiction of any kind – alcohol, drugs etc. at a young age is another thing that I would want to witness a shift in.

NIKITA, CORO ❀
Age 16, Mumbai

My goal is to have a hotel management job.

The big change for me will be to see girls and boys walk together, and for girls to get the same respect and enjoy the same freedom as men. In every aspect of life where women face discrimination, I would like to see it change!

SHAMINA, JOSH ❀
Age 18, Trilokpuri

My goal is to improve my technical and communication skills. Long term, I want to pursue a career as a Company Secretary.

I would like to see a shift in the perspective of my community members who believe that marriage is more important than education.

KAJAL, Akshara ❀
Age 20, Mumbai

My personal goal is to work with an organisation that works for girls.

Girls should be able to enjoy a life of independence and freedom, which only boys tend to have the privilege of.

SUPRIYA, LAHI ❀
Age 17, Pune

I want to be a police officer.

I would like to see everyone have the right to make their own decisions. My personal goal is to help make girls self-reliant, and to help women get employment.

RAVEENA, Chintan ❀
Age 16 , Ghaziabad

My personal goal is to be a Navy Officer, to help girls and boys equally who do not have access to their rights.

The people in my community do not support girls. They impose restrictions on what we wear and what we do. I would like to see a change in their outlook.

SANDHYA, TYPF ❀
Age 16, Nizammudin

My personal goal is to be a trainer.

I'd like higher parental engagement in girl-focused work. We should use street plays as a tool to create awareness about the issues and challenges of adolescent girls.

SAVITA, Azad Foundation ❀
Age 26, Delhi

I can't decide yet on my personal goal.

I would like to see girls become independent and step out of their homes. I want the azaadi (freedom) for all girls to pursue and fulfill their dreams with support and encouragement from their parents.

SUMAN, Bright Future ❀
Age 20, Mumbai

My personal goal is to be a fashion designer.

I want more open parent-child communication. I'd like to see girls able to complete education, fulfill dreams and stand on their own two feet.

RANI, Jan Sahas ❀
Age 23, Chittorgarh

My personal goal is to become a certified accountant, and to improve the status of education for girls.

I would like to see equality in my area where historically there has always been discrimination against girls.

BUSHRA, Medha ❀
Age 18, Lucknow

My personal goal is to be a social worker.

The big change I would like to see is for girls and boys to be seen as equals and given the same opportunities. In my community, people don't value girls as much as boys.

RUBI, Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT) ❀
Age 18, Delhi

I want to pursue a career in psychology.

I want to see girls getting involved without organizations having to push them. Girls taking initiative, becoming independent.

SEEMA, Vacha Trust ❀
Age 18, Mumbai

My personal goal is to become a doctor when I grow up.

There are many girls who aspire to do great things but do not even get the permission to step out of their houses... I would like to see a world in which girls have the freedom to step out of their homes and do what they want.

SEJAL, SAATH ❀
Age 15, Ahmedabad

My personal goal is to work in a village to understand the problems of people and help them.

If people's mindsets change, then that will be the biggest change.

SHILPA, Swechha ❀
Age 21, Delhi

My personal goal is to be a police officer, to help girls who face harassment.

I want no more discrimination on the basis of gender, or restrictions on girls' education. If girls are not even allowed to step out of their homes (like in my community), how will they ever know what is going on in the world outside?

SANJU, CREA ❀
Age 20, Karnadhari, Banaras

GIRLS' LEADERSHIP CREATES CHANGE

With the formation of the Girls Advisory Council, EMpower has created a framework that provides adolescent girls with the space, support and opportunity for leadership.

Programs that involve girls in decision-making can affect change on multiple levels:

BUILDING GIRLS' AGENCY IN THEIR OWN LIVES

Listening to what girls have to say and implementing their suggestions helps build agency, nurtures confidence and hones leadership skills. These qualities can transform the way in which girls negotiate important decisions linked to their education, relationships and career.

INCREASING GIRLS' SUCCESS IN PROGRAMS

The GAC enables girls to shape programs intended for them. Active involvement of the girl leaders in designing the programs results in a sense of ownership, and helps ensure that the programs address girls' critical needs in relevant ways. This can potentially reduce attrition rate and ensure maximum participation, increasing the probability of girls' success.

ENCOURAGING INNOVATION IN PROGRAM DESIGN

When girls make recommendations to strengthen programming, they bring fresh perspective and first-hand knowledge of their particular context, to inform what works and identify areas for improvement. They are able to pinpoint obstacles and brainstorm innovative, creative ways in which programs can eliminate, reduce or address barriers that affect girls.

CATALYZING COMMUNITY CHANGE BEYOND THE PROGRAM

The Girls Advisory Council models a culture that respects girls' intrinsic value and recognizes their perspective as valid. By positioning girls as leaders in the GAC, they become visible as agents of change within their programs, homes and communities. As the girls gain skills, and programs better support girls and engage communities, the potential for wider ripple effects of community change increases.

GIRLS AT THE CENTER THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

EMpower brought together the 16 members of the Council, with staff representatives from each of their programs, for the first-ever Girl Advisory Council meeting in April 2018 in Delhi. For some of the girl participants, this was their first time traveling to Delhi, or outside of their own city.

The Council meeting was a highly participative workshop facilitated by EMpower staff, and buzzing with energy!

STEP 1: TRAINING

Girls set goals for themselves and outlined ways to achieve these goals. Using the EMpower-created tool "The Girl Path," the girls described the barriers they experience along the "path" of their lives. These include barriers to accessing programs, like getting parent permission to leave the house, and barriers to success, such as programs not addressing their key needs.

STEP 2: DELIBERATION

After identifying the barriers that girls must overcome to access and succeed in programs, the girls turned to creating solutions. They broke into six thematic groups, based on EMpower's focus areas in the current 2016-2019 India Strategy. Within these smaller groups, the girls brainstormed:

- strategies, actions and activities that they believe are vital to the success of a program working on that thematic area,
- solutions to the barriers that were identified in the Girl Path exercise,
- and ideas to make their current programs stronger and more robust, to increase chances of success.

STEP 3: DECISION-MAKING

The girl leaders then came together to discuss each thematic area in detail, with each participant giving her perspective. The girls worked together to collate their advice, collaborating until they felt that their recommendations represented all of their input.

STEP 4: PRESENTATION

The girls drafted 12 key themes that they believe are key for programs to address to help girls succeed. The girls presented their recommendations to EMpower staff and to the program representatives from their 16 organizations.

"I have attended number of meetings, but this one was different, as there were people from different states who shared their thoughts and experiences. I tried to imbibe all those thinking and perceptions. It was a great process of learning and understanding."
Seema, Vacha Trust representative

Check out the EMpower-created tool "The Girl Path," now available in four languages, and other youth development resources on EMpower's website!
www.empowerweb.org/ youth-development-tools

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT ADOLESCENT GIRLS

The key themes identified by the Girls Advisory Council are being integrated into EMpower's strategy in India moving forward. These themes may have broader applications for individuals or organizations working with girls' programming in India or abroad. It is our hope that organizations actively seek to put girls' perspectives and voices at the center of their planning, strategy and decision-making.

The 12 key themes that the girl leaders identified are:

1. ENGAGING WITH PARENTS - The girls feel that their parents are their biggest gatekeepers. If organizations engage more frequently with parents, the girls' chances of success will be higher.

2. CONNECTING GIRLS TO GOVERNMENT SCHEMES / FACILITATING PAPERWORK - There are many government schemes, benefits and incentives that girls in India are eligible for, but they feel they do not know about them, or do not know how to access them.

3. BEGINNING EARLY - Programs often begin too late. It is vital to begin engagement early to broaden young people's mindsets before they have made decisions about their education or careers.

4. INVOLVING COUNSELORS' SUPPORT - Counselling is a key method to helping girls overcome issues.

5. CREATING A GIRLS-ONLY SPACE - The girls stated the vital need to provide a safe space for girls to network and, more importantly, for them to complete their homework.

6. INFORMING TEACHERS AND TRAINERS - Teachers need to be gender aware. Despite the importance of the relationship, many girls find it difficult to communicate with teachers about concerns.

7. ENGAGING WITH ALUMNI / ALUMNI AS TRAINERS - Alumni girls are the best community mobilizers and trainers, because they know exactly what the girls are going through in every step and can serve as role models.

8. ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS - Organizations must conduct market mapping of which employers are out there and what skill set they are looking for, to best prepare girls for success.

9. ASKING, WHO ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE YOU'RE WORKING WITH? - NGOs should consider expanding the scope of whom they are working with.

10. FOCUSING ON GIRLS' MINDS - Before any form of technical training, the girls have to work on their own minds first, including self-confidence and the ability to make their own decisions.

11. WORKING WITH BOYS – To affect change in girls' lives, the girl leaders believe it is vital to also work with boys.

12. ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE - GBV affects all of the thematic areas, and must be addressed in terms of girls' rights and recourse.

In addition to these broad themes, the girl leaders identified key outcomes and specific methods that organizations can use to implement the girls' suggestions. See the detailed recommendations on EMpower's website: www.empowerweb.org/gac-key-themes

TURNING GIRLS' RECOMMENDATIONS INTO ACTION!

In order to put the girls' expertise into action, EMpower launched an award initiative asking current grantee partners in India to propose a pilot program addressing at least one of the key themes. The Girls Advisory Council representatives worked with their organizations to conceive and draft a proposal for the opportunity to win a small grant.

The award initiative enables our grantees to test the creative, innovative solutions suggested by the Girls Advisory Council, with the girls as instrumental contributors to the program design process. By implementing the girls' suggestions, our grantees provide key insights about the feasibility and impact of the ideas.

Continuing the GAC model of girl leadership, the proposals received were reviewed by the Girls Advisory Council members, as well as EMpower staff and supporters.

THE FOUR WINNERS OF THE INITIATIVE ARE:

GRANTEE PARTNER CORO ⚐
Key Theme #11: "Working with Boys" and Key Theme #12: "Addressing Gender Based Violence"

CORO is engaging with 50-60 boys to address traditional ideas of what it means to "be a man" that can encourage harmful behavior such as catcalling or assault. CORO will survey the incidences of gender-based violence (GBV) in the community, and hold workshops to shift the social norms linked with such violence. The boy participants will create and run their own campaign to reduce GBV and raise community awareness.

GRANTEE PARTNER JAN SAHAS ⚐
Key Theme #1: "Engaging with Parents" and Key Theme #2: "Connecting Girls to Government Schemes"

Jan Sahas is promoting girls' success by holding parent engagement meetings to better inform parents about the organization's work, facilitating workshops to help girls access government schemes, and providing counselling sessions for girls and their parents. They will measure the impact of these efforts through baseline and endline studies.

GRANTEE PARTNER VACHA TRUST ⚐
Key Theme #7: "Engaging with Alumni / Alumni as Trainers"

Vacha Trust proposed engaging alumni to act as peer support to girls across their programs, to encourage engagement. The group of female alumni would train 5-6 girls across 11 communities, who would assume a leadership role in their community programs.
Award won but not implemented

GRANTEE PARTNER CREA ⚐
Key theme #12: "Addressing Gender Based Violence"

CREA is training 10 girl "change-makers" to work with 625 girls in 5 communities on the issue of gender-based violence through workshops on gender, violence, self-defense and girls' rights. The girls will also use theater to reach over 1,500 people within the community through plays addressing gender-based violence!

INSPIRING OTHER INITIATIVES

In addition to EMpower's India strategy, the Girls Advisory Council members' expertise and recommendations continue to play a significant role in other global initiatives!

INFLUENCING EMPOWER'S SPARK & IGNITE AWARDS
The EMpower Spark & Ignite Awards inspire and enable current grantee partners to "think outside the box" in their work with adolescent girls. EMpower launched the 8th competition round with the theme, "Engaging Mothers, Fathers and Other Caregivers to Increase Girls' Chances of Success," based on the GAC's recommendation. Eight organizations each won $10,000 to implement their innovative ideas!

### WEIGHING IN ON EMPOWER SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER RECRUITMENT
Two members of the Girls' Advisory Council interviewed shortlisted candidates for the Senior Program Officer for India position, with support from EMpower staff. This exercise strengthened the girls' interview skills, and demonstrated the weight of their opinions in our work.

TAKING THE LEAD AT AZAD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EMpower grantee partner Azad Foundation ran an 'International Conference on Making Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) work for the Marginalised' in New Delhi. EMpower hosted a session titled 'Understanding the perspective of adolescent girls on skills required to pursue NTL', entirely featuring and run by the Girls Advisory Council. They spoke with candour and confidence about the importance of exposure to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and non-traditional income generation roles, inspiring the room with their personal stories.

DECISION-MAKING AT GIRLS FIRST FUND PANEL
In March 2019, six Girls Advisory Council girl leaders formed a panel to provide recommendations for the selection of grantees for the Girls First Fund, a donor collaborative of leading philanthropic organizations and individuals focused on ending child marriage. The panel interviewed 21 shortlisted organizations over three days, and made recommendations on the strongest applicants.
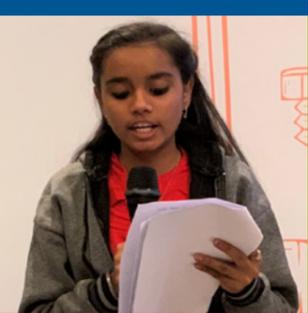
MOVING FORWARD

The second Girls Advisory Council Meeting convened in April 2019! Results of the pilot programs were shared with the Council members, including monitoring and evaluation metrics. Based on these learnings, the girls will continue to move forward EMpower's 2019-2021 strategy for India.

We look forward to their insights as we continue to put them at the center of our work!

Nominations for Girls Advisory Council members launched

→ Girls Advisory Council meets to provide feedback and shape short-term grants

→ Grants award process launched and small grants implemented

→ Short-term grants results reviewed with the Council

→ Council convenes to provide input on EMpower's India 2019-2022 Strategy

Thank you to the adolescent girl members of the Girls Advisory Council, for your expertise. Your leadership inspires us, and your contributions enable us to improve and grow our work. You are the drivers of change.

Our appreciation to all of our EMpower grantee partner organizations in India for your participation in the Girls Advisory Council, and shared dedication to improving the lives of youth.

The Girls Advisory Council work is funded through EMpower India Trust.

Let's Get Social:

EMpower

facebook.com/empowerweb

@empowerweb

linkedin.com/company/empowerweb

EMpower – The Emerging Markets Foundation is a global philanthropy focused on at-risk youth (ages 10-24) in emerging market countries. EMpower's footprint includes offices in New York, London, Hong Kong, Singapore and Delhi, on-the-ground program staff presence in Delhi and Istanbul, and a global donor community.

Our partnerships with local, community-based organizations in 15 EM countries provide at-risk young people with the tools and resources they need to live healthy, productive lives, becoming our next generation of leaders.

EMpower India Trust is a philanthropic subsidiary of EMpower – The Emerging Markets Foundation that provides meaningful support to change the lives of at-risk youth across India.

www.empowerweb.org

EMpower

Enriching young lives in emerging markets

| New York | London | Hong Kong |
| Delhi | Singapore |