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# Educational Opportunities for Adolescent Girls' Empowerment in Developing Countries

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University of San Francisco

**Educational Opportunities for Adolescent Girls'  
Empowerment in Developing Countries**

A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International & Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Human Rights Education

by  
Mary Jane Kober  
May 2016

# **Educational Opportunities for Adolescent Girls' Empowerment in Developing Countries**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

by

Mary Jane Kober

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approved by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Dr. Monisha Bajaj  
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Date

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## ABSTRACT

Adolescent girls' in developing countries coming from impoverished backgrounds face the added challenge of societies that marginalize the value of education for girls. Complex economic, social and cultural barriers to access secondary education pose challenges and obstacles to their human rights to education, equality and dignity. This study provides an analysis of the relationship between education and empowerment by looking at five innovative non-governmental formal and non-formal educational programs in Guatemala, sub-Saharan Africa, and Bangladesh. The theoretical framework focuses on the empowerment process, transformative agency, intrinsic empowerment, and the conditions and competencies that support education and leadership. The purpose of the study is to compare and contrast different approaches to empowerment of adolescent girls through education and leadership programs. The literature review covers empowerment, the education-empowerment link, gender equality, and the education-development/leadership link. Program websites were reviewed and additional information was received via personal communication. The programs were shown to have helped girls actualize the empowerment process through innovative pedagogy, well-researched and creative curriculum, the development of leadership skills, provision of experiential education, and cultivation of agency.

It was found that reaching girls at an optimal time in their life will enhance the benefits of education, mentoring, and leadership development. The programs provide education with a critical consciousness and practical livelihood and leadership skills integral to the girls' empowerment process, agency and transformation. A continuous policy commitment working toward gender equity is vital as education alone cannot create empowerment. Many developing countries have patriarchal societies that are limiting to girls' full development. Only by having girls begin to challenge such ideologies using their voice and education to bring about change will there be hope for gender equity, more empowered girls and women, and more fulfilled and dignified lives.

A workshop intended for U.S. high school educators interested in the relationship between human rights, gender equity, and empowerment while connecting global to local issues is included in the appendix.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

When Emelin was 13, she asked the mayor of her rural Guatemalan town to find ways to help girls stay in school and get better health care. He laughed out loud. “You are wasting my time; you should go home,” he told Emelin and her friend Elba. Emelin, now 15, spoke by invitation at the United Nations in the “Every Woman Every Child” program presented as part of the Commission on the Status of Women. She sat and spoke alongside U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon about the obstacles girls face in her community and how she and Elba persuaded the mayor to implement and fund policies that would help. (Cole, 2015)

Adolescent girls in developing countries who come from an impoverished background face the added challenge of being able to afford the cost of secondary education. Reasons such as a preference for sons, child marriage, early pregnancy, gender-based violence and harassment, parental indifference and traditions inhibit a girl’s ability to make her own decisions; but an additional hurdle in societies that marginalize the value of a girl’s education can be seen in the lack of financial access to gaining an education and leadership skills that prepares them for a life full of equal potential to their male counterparts.

In the words of the United Nations, “education is not only a right but a passport to human development” (as cited in Winthrop & McGivney, 2014, p. 1). Complex economic, social, and cultural barriers to girls’ access to secondary education in developing countries pose challenges and obstacles to their human right to education, equality, and dignity to which all human beings are entitled (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

The central importance of education for the full development of the human personality (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) is one of the reasons why governments around the world have committed to ensuring its delivery to children, both boys and girls through different initiatives: Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable

Development Goals. This right is articulated through several United Nations human rights documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976). These documents jointly suggest that not providing girls with the access to complete primary and/or secondary school deprives them of the universal right to education and equality.

According to Lloyd and Young (2009), in the context of life stages and opportunity,

An adolescent girl stands at the doorway of adulthood. In that moment, much is decided. If she stays in school, remains healthy, and gains real skills, she will marry later, have fewer and healthier children, and earn an income that she'll invest back into her family. But if she follows the path laid down by poverty, she'll leave school and enter marriage. As a girl mother, an unskilled worker, and an uneducated citizen, she'll miss out on the opportunity to reach her full human potential. And each individual tragedy, multiplied by millions of girls, will contribute to a much larger downward spiral for her nation. (p. x)

Investing in girls' education is the right action to take on moral, ethical, and human rights grounds (Lloyd & Young, 2009; Winthrop & McGivney, 2016; Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013).

Perhaps no other segment of our society "faces as much exploitation and injustice, and we owe girls our support as integral, yet overlooked, members of the human family" (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. x). Investing in girls is also the smart thing to do (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. x). If the 600 million adolescent girls in the developing world today follow the too common trajectory of becoming school drop-outs, being subjected to early marriage and early childbirth, and being vulnerable to sexual violence and HIV/AIDS, then cycles of poverty will only continue (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. x).

Per King and Winthrop (2015, p. 2), there are seven main benefits of girls' education to society that clearly point out its significance: 1. More educated girls and women aspire to become leaders and thus expand a country's leadership and entrepreneurial talent; 2. It is the

quality of schooling that really counts; economic growth is faster when both girls and boys learn; 3. More equal education means greater economic empowerment for women through more equal work opportunities; 4. More educated girls and young women are healthier – and as adults they have healthier children; 5. More educated mothers have more educated children; 6. More educated women are better able to protect themselves and their families from the effects of economic and environmental shocks; and 7. Education is valuable for girls in and of itself. These point out the un-debatable rationale for “prioritizing girls’ education as a fundamental human right and as an instrument for advancing health, economic, social, and overall development outcomes” (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016, p. 287).

Integrally tied into education in developing countries is the concept of empowerment. Generally speaking, empowerment addresses the capacity to gain power and control over one's decisions and resources that affect one's life (Shah, 2011, p.91). How are the two related? Defining empowerment is difficult since its definitions vary significantly in both operational and analytic terms, and it has become an overused term in scholarly literature (Kabeer, 1999; Monkman, 2011, p. 5; Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002, p. 3; Rowlands, 1997; Shah, 2011, p. 91, Stromquist, 1995, p. 13). Some feel the word risks losing its resonance with social change (Monkman, 2011; Stromquist, 1995, p. 13). Optimally, empowerment is used to signal processes of social transformation, which include personal, social, political and economic changes in relation to access to resources, agency and outcomes that tend in the direction of substantive gender equality (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011; Monkman, 2011; Murphy-Graham, 2012).

Schools can be a unique space that facilitate what Shah (2011) calls intrinsic empowerment—the growth of an individual’s autonomy, self-confidence, awareness, and strength—for both teachers and students. Schooling continues to be seen—by financial

institutions, the United Nations (UN), multi-and bi-lateral agencies, and the women's movement in general—in uncritical ways and stakeholders seek greater access by girls and women to formal education (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014, p. 6). It is assumed that increased access to education plays a transformative role in creating gender identities but this is untrue as seen by the visible reproduction of gender norms and practices in most countries (Lloyd, 2013, p. 7; Stromquist & Monkman, 2014, p. 6). Schools and processes of learning can operate both to reproduce and to transform inequalities (Unterhalter et al., 2014, p. 18). It is key to remember that schooling does not always endorse gender equality.

In developing countries where formal schooling is not possible for all girls due to the reasons listed above, sometimes there are opportunities for non-formal education. These are often the *only* educational opportunities for girls and can provide a sense of empowerment allowing some control over decisions and resources that will determine the quality of their life (Shah 2011, p. 90). The link between education and empowerment goes beyond formal schooling. In this respect, Kabeer (1999) refers to empowerment as entailing a process of change that involves the ability to make choices and have alternatives.

For more than two decades, girls' education has been recognized as a global priority and incorporated into development targets, which had their beginnings in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and included education and training for women, eradication of illiteracy, non-discriminatory education, and equal access to education (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016, p. 288). This was followed in 1990 and 2000 with international development commitments including Education for All (EFA), which was committed to end gender disparity in education by 2005 and achieve parity by 2015 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016). The 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) included universal

access to and gender parity in primary education (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). These action plans have encouraged millions of children to attend primary school in developing countries with the intent to bridge the gender gap (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). This has resulted in most countries achieving universal primary enrollment and gender gaps becoming smaller or even disappearing, and attention being shifted to secondary school-age (adolescent) girls (Lloyd, 2013, p. 7).

Empowering adolescent girls through education has become a priority of multiple stakeholders, including aid agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, and corporations (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 1). This rapid growth in the unmet needs of adolescent girls coincides with the global education reform movement to improving learning outcomes, relevant curriculum, and more effective pedagogies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd 2015, p. 15). The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have absorbed the MDGs (which expired in 2015) and include four goals that incorporate quality education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and decent work/economic growth (United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2015) that will, if achieved, benefit adolescent girls as they develop and as they transition to adulthood to lead more fulfilled and dignified lives.

Along with this shift to looking at adolescent girls' education there is the realization that education is more than just about providing access. Although in its infancy, looking at how education can be empowering to adolescent girls is being researched (Bajaj, 2009; Bandeira et al., 2012; DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011; Monkman, 2011; Ross, Shah & Wang, 2011; Unterhalter et al., 2014). With increasing public attention on the urgency of educating women and girls worldwide there is concern by some "that the public might be satisfied with the simple formula: just build schools and girls will be empowered" (Monkman, 2011, p. 1). Many have

demonstrated that it is not that simple. Promoting gender equality and empowerment through education is multi-layered.

Changing the mindset of parents, civil society, regional and national governments in developing countries—the current mindset that it is normal for girls not to finish school—is imperative for the growth of adolescent girls’ empowerment and certainly their right to education (Cole, 2015). Economic empowerment typically comes as a result of education (whether formal or non-formal) and as attitudes toward working women are a major factor in fostering an environment that encourages (or discourages) young women from having a career outside the home, one must keep in mind the overlap between education, empowerment, and the economics of development.

Education for girls during adolescence can be transformative, and addressing theory, pragmatic approaches, and concepts integral to understanding the value of educating this group is valuable to understanding what works best for girls’ education and empowerment. “Girls’ education is a powerful force for catalyzing a virtuous circle of positive development outcomes” (King & Winthrop, 2015, p. vii). As the opening story to this paper illustrates, girls—empowered to advocate for change, and with an ambition to be educated—can be witness to a transformation that benefits them and their local communities and can sometimes lead to a global platform, one that might even include speaking at the United Nations.

### **Background and Need for the Study**

Girls across the globe are healthier than ever, they live longer, and more are going to school than any other time in history (Poole, 2015). Most girls face discrimination simply because they *are* girls. That discrimination happens at every point in their lives, as Poole (2015) points out in his story as part of an National Public Radio (NPR) series profiling teens around the

world. There are about 600 million adolescent girls living worldwide (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015a) with approximately sixty-three million girls worldwide denied the right to attend primary and lower-secondary school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, 2013). The numbers illuminate a compelling story. But this study goes beyond the numbers, in order to tell a more holistic story.

Quality education/empowering education is indicated by more than just numbers of girls who attend school. In order for an education to be empowering, to be meaningful, and to be of good quality, the issue of quality schooling/education is of increasing importance and study as related to the types of experiences both boys and girls have in schools. Sperling and Winthrop (2015, p. 253) refer to three main dimensions of a quality education: (1) inputs (e.g. textbooks, hiring more teachers), (2) learning outcomes, and (3) social learning outcomes (e.g. attitudes toward gender equality and ability to communicate effectively with others). This issue relates, for example, to appropriate curricular content that reinforces or fails to reinforce gender and social inequalities (Monkman, 2011, p. 2). The approaches highlighted in this study illustrate these various dimensions.

As addressed earlier there are several reasons why girls are marginalized in the education system that have a ripple effect on the political, economic and societal systems from which they come. In essence, the marginalization of adolescent girls negatively affects every aspect of their lives and hence the families, communities and the global society of which they are part. Women and girls comprise about one-half of the population yet many face obstacles hindering their potential. This study sheds light on the work done in specific areas globally that aims to empower girls, to train them on leadership skills, to provide access to a secondary education or

provide training in a non-formal setting that gives them the skillset to live their lives in a more meaningful way, one with dignity and respect.

By looking at the United Nations Development Program Gender Inequality Index—a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market, (as cited in Poole, 2015, Girls and the Big Picture section, para. 4)—the trend over the last 10 years is promising. But as long as there *are* girls out of the school system, as long as there *are* girls marrying at ages less than 18 years of age, as long as there *are* girls having babies at age 11—then the work is ahead of us to research and find those initiatives, those schools, those non-formal educational settings where positive results are making a difference in adolescent girls’ lives.

In illustrating the work of the non-government organizations (NGOs) Akili Dada, BRAC, Camfed, and Let Girls Lead, and of the private school Daraja Academy, this study highlights how innovative programs can help break the cycle of poverty in developing countries and expose adolescent girls to an education and to the value of leadership training, and what it means to be empowered. There is a need to introduce these programs so that future research can harvest good practices from pragmatic ones and continue to work on areas of need. Advocacy work exposes the opportunities available to marginalized adolescents and deepens our understanding of what works for quality education and empowerment for these girls.

Economic well-being as a factor in development (for individuals and in the larger country context) and its role in breaking the cycle of poverty is integrally tied into empowerment. As cited in DeJaeghere & Lee (2011, p. 30), Sen argues that development ought to address the societal conditions that create inequalities (marginalization) as well as those that create opportunities for someone to choose what he or she values for well-being or empowerment.

Adolescent girls in developing countries who are the most marginalized face a triple handicap from the start: being female, being poor, and living in remote rural areas (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016 p. 287). Economically they are challenged and the hurdle of financial access to gaining an education and/or leadership skills can be a barrier to economic advancement which will impact their social and personal advancement and ultimately their life's potential and their capacity for empowerment.

By exposing girls to educational opportunities and leadership training they are given tools to navigate their own world and make choices as to how empowerment can help them look outside their poor, rural communities and make plans for the future. These plans could include completing both primary *and* secondary education, plans for non-formal educational programs because that is what will work for them given their individual circumstances, or a plan for leadership training to help them learn the art of advocacy and agency giving rise to a sense of well-being and empowerment. “Girls’ education is a powerful force for catalyzing a virtuous circle of positive development outcomes” (King & Winthrop, 2015, p. vii).

According to Lloyd and Young (2009, p. 10), the very fact that the learning trajectory does not always fit well with the development trajectory in many poor countries—if children get off to a late start to school or resume their education after some interval—has been part of the impetus for the non-formal learning programs. Additionally, one of the EFA goals, Goal No. 3, focuses on the education needs of adolescents (stated as “young people and adults”) for appropriate learning and life-skills programs (UNESCO, 2015, p. 2). “Implicit in this goal is the recognition that a primary school education is an insufficient preparation for adulthood, and that adolescents and young adults need to continue learning regardless of their prior educational level” (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 13). The 2030 SDGs four, five and eight incorporate target

goals that address equitable educational learning opportunities (United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2015) for adolescents in formal and non-formal settings.

This begs the question: Why should we care? We care because of the benefits of girls' education to society (as noted above). Education is central to a person's ability to respond to opportunities and challenges encountered in life. According to King and Winthrop (2015):

By equipping young people with a set of competencies and skills, behaviors and attitudes, and a sense of cooperation and social responsibility that enable them to participate in society as productive and responsible citizens, education contributes to economic development, lowers poverty and inequity, and improves lives. (p. 1)

The role of non-formal education serves a number of purposes. First, non-formal education serves adolescent girls who have missed out on school at the right age and need to catch up and reenter the formal education system, at either the primary school level or enter secondary school directly. Hence, it can complement formal schooling. Second, non-formal schooling can also serve as an alternative to formal education for those girls who have missed school all together, dropped out before learning the basics, or opted out of secondary school due to academic or financial reasons (Lloyd & Young 2009, p. 14). These alternative programs can help not only with basic education curriculum/skills but also with life skills and vocational skills, including leadership training for girls. The examples highlighted in this study illustrate this.

Beyond just enrolling girls in school or in non-formal education settings, it is time for the global community to focus on ensuring that all girls complete secondary education with the skills they need for their lives and livelihoods. This can only help to curb the cycle of poverty so prevalent in certain marginalized populations. Efforts to provide quality education, formal or non-formal, will contribute to satisfying the potential of adolescent girls' empowerment intended to "broaden girls' range of competencies both to reduce the special risks they face during adolescence and to enhance their social and economic assets as adults" (Murphy-Graham &

Lloyd, 2015, p. 2). It requires moving beyond the “ambition from gender parity to a vision of success that better reflects what girls aspire to and deserve in their lives” (Winthrop & McGivney, 2014, p. 2). Hence, there is a need to address the relationship between girls’ education, social change, and empowerment – for social, economic, and intellectual advancement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast different approaches to empowerment of adolescent girls through education. It focuses on the premise that education is knowledge, and by educating adolescent girls and allowing them the opportunity to have a secondary education or providing them an informal education, it will give them a chance to break the cycle of poverty. It could potentially provide them with a career or livelihood, however and in whatever capacity that may be defined. That capacity varies by country, by culture, and by available resources. Hence, empowerment via education in one scenario can look quite different from that in another context. For example, girls’ empowerment in a Guatemalan village may represent something different than what it represents to girls in an out-of-school program in Uganda.

The goal of this study is to contribute to the literature about adolescent girls’ education in developing countries while highlighting the link between education and empowerment. Education can be either in a formal or non-formal setting and depending which environment is available, the *access* to that setting for the girls will dictate which one they will experience. In the appendix is a workshop for educators and practitioners developed for a United States high school age audience that address the different struggles and survival stories of adolescent girls globally who have challenged the status quo and/or succeeded in continuing their education in

both formal and non-formal settings. This is appropriate for boys and girls as it is informative for both audiences, it brings an awareness of global issues, and it incorporates and addresses the role that boys and young men can play as related to current issues in the United States affecting adolescent girls through a human rights lens.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What programs are successfully working to empower adolescent girls globally and what approaches do they use?
2. How is formal education vs. non-formal education making a difference in certain contexts and encouraging empowerment for adolescent girls?
3. How can girl-focused educational initiatives (formal and non-formal) promote leadership and empowerment for adolescent girls?

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are four frameworks chosen to address how education can support adolescent girls' empowerment by looking at the link between education and empowerment in the literature review: Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's (2015) core conditions and core competencies framework; Ross et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of empowerment as two interrelated dimensions – instrumental and intrinsic empowerment (or interrelated outcome *and* process); Rowlands' (1997) empowerment/leadership framework; and Bajaj's (2009) transformative agency. There are principles or features in each of these models that are woven into the programs selected to illustrate how education can support girls' empowerment and often there is framework overlap in these programs (for example, both agency and intrinsic empowerment may be a feature in one program). Additionally, there are contributions from other theories/frameworks that inform and

extend the theoretical understandings of the education-empowerment link, primarily based on earlier conceptualizations of empowerment focused on adult women (e.g. Kabeer, 1999; Stromquist, 1995).

Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's (2015) framework of how education can support girls' empowerment consists of a set of three "necessary conditions" (without these, education will have a minimal impact on girls' empowerment: 1) the learning environment must be physically, materially, and socio-culturally conducive to learning; 2) the education fosters their dignity and equality with others; and 3) the education requires action, or learning by doing (experiential education). These conditions support the four competencies an empowering education should ideally foster and be informed by: 1) critical thinking and knowledge acquisition; 2) social competencies; 3) personal competencies and 4) productive competencies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015).

The school/empowerment link has its foundation in Ross et al.'s (2011) research into two girls' education projects in India and China and how schools enable a complex interplay of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment. Empowerment is seen as a process illuminated by three intertwining influences that constrain and/or enhance schooling's potential to enable girls' empowerment: 1) son preference; 2) expanding educational access and opportunities; and 3) shifting levels of "trust" in schools as a critical "good" for girls' futures (double truth that schools both empower and constrain).

Instrumental empowerment refers to meeting girls' practical interests and needs, such as educational access and literacy while intrinsic empowerment encompasses both individual ("power within") and collective ("power-with") processes such as self-confidence, critical awareness of social norms, and capacities to work with others for change (Ross et al., 2011).

Rowlands (1997) empowerment/leadership model first presents four forms of power – which need to be understood in order to have better clarity for what empowerment means: 1. “Power within”: cognitive change, belief in self-worth; 2. “Power to”: behavioral change, ability to make choices and influence others; 3. “Power over”: ability to control others; and 4. “Power with”: acting with others to challenge discriminatory structures. Ross et al.’s research (2011) illustrates how schooling provided the girls with what Rowlands (1997) calls the “power within” and the “power with” opportunities, raising their confidence and self-esteem, increasing their willingness to take responsibility, and encouraging their collective and individual initiative. Rowlands’ forms of power are experienced and demonstrated through three dimensions of empowerment: on a personal level (developing a sense of self and individual confidence, a relational level (developing the ability to negotiate and influence others) and collective level (i.e. individuals working together to achieve a greater impact (1997, p. 15).

Bajaj (2009, p. 554) underscores student agency, defined as “belief in one’s present or future ability to improve individual social mobility and transform elements of one’s society.” Transformative student agency was woven into the curriculum and school structure in a private Zambian secondary school in Bajaj’s research where leadership development and career goals reflected a desire to improve one’s community, build a positive self-conception, and a belief in one’s own sense of agency (Bajaj, 2009). Agency is integral to Murphy-Graham and Lloyd’s (2015) empowerment model as related to the core condition of learning by doing or experiential education. Bajaj (2009) further analyzes how “agency is a complex phenomenon, may be a situational characteristic and is limited and informed by both temporal and ideological factors” (p. 552). In her research, Bajaj (2009) finds that transformative agency is enabled by alternative schooling and attempts to “disrupt the reproductive tendencies of state schooling” (p. 552).

This study asks the question, “How does education affect adolescent girls’ empowerment?” An underlying theme throughout the theoretical frameworks addressed is one of opportunity for and access to education. If girls are without access, then they will lose out on an opportunity for educational advancement. Without opportunities for education, girls’ prospects for future growth and development will be limited due to their contexts. The programs chosen illustrate varying educational models for adolescent girls’ empowerment and leadership. Yet, similarly, they all exemplify how agency, how leadership training and opportunities, how an *education* can provide a foundation for empowerment.

These frameworks will be expanded upon in chapters two to four. Through the programs selected to illustrate successful models of girls’ empowerment, the reader will be informed to possibilities globally which create “girl-friendly” learning environments that are empowering to girls via formal and non-formal education settings. These models help foster a belief system or an ideology about the power of an education: by promoting positive attitudes in communities, families, and adolescents and by encouraging shifts in both cultural/societal norms and traditions, all of which contribute to educational opportunities and progress toward a girls’ right to an education. It is also about driving social change in communities, locally and globally, that will inevitably lead to adolescent girls’ empowerment. Unleashing girls’ power can only *create* positive gains, locally and globally.

### **Methodology**

To collect data and other materials for the study the researcher obtained peer-reviewed academic journal articles and a literature review on girls’ education and gender equity. Reports from The Brookings Institution, United Nations agencies, Population Council, Let Girls Lead, Camfed, and BRAC International were surveyed for the purposes of this study. Additional

resources included books written by academic researchers and a National Public Radio (NPR) series on adolescent girls. The majority of the literature used was published within the past 10 years with earlier literature included as necessary for its significance. The literature was obtained to compile research on both formal and non-formal education programs that focus on adolescent girls' empowerment for development and leadership. This is to inform the reader of various creative programs dealing with the issue in primarily rural settings for marginalized girls and how they are successful in encouraging empowerment and leadership skills via educational models.

For the programs chosen for this study, their websites were reviewed and additional information was received via personal communication (Skype, telephone and e-mail) in order to get first-hand knowledge of the program's successes and challenges. The study examines five programs located on three continents but all have the singular goal of empowering adolescent girls through education and leadership programs (formal and non-formal). Underscoring the study is the question of under what conditions is education empowering for adolescent girls.

The study first covers a literature review in Chapter Two on topics of empowerment, the education/empowerment link, gender equality, and the education-development/leadership link. Chapters three and four highlight the five models selected to illustrate transformative formal and non-formal educational education programs for girls as interventions addressing adolescent girl's empowerment (AGE). This study focus is on the adolescent (using a definition of ages 10 to 19) although some of the programs include young women older than age 19 which comprise a small percentage of those covered in the study.

The formal education programs include the Campaign for Female Education (Camfed) that operates in sub-Saharan Africa and Daraja Academy in Kenya. Non-formal programs

reviewed are: Akili Dada in Kenya, BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program in Bangladesh and Uganda, and Let Girls Lead in Guatemala. The programs were included due to their innovative programming, their philosophy and/or mission to specifically address adolescent girls' empowerment, leadership, education, and their potential to be change agents.

Camfed's focus is in rural sub-Saharan Africa and operates by supporting girls to go to school, runs extracurricular programs, and involves communities in its various programs in poor rural areas where girls face many disadvantages but where programs are helping them develop "agency" and transforming communities and themselves. Their programming has been scaled up to reach over three million children in improved learning environments (Lake, 2015, p. 48).

Camfed has a new program, "*My Better World*," that focuses on individual competencies, agency, and empowerment.

Daraja Academy is a secondary girls school that emphasizes recruiting leaders, has an educational model that combines Kenyan educational standards with innovative teaching practices (e.g. community partnerships) and focus areas (including women's empowerment and leadership). It embodies this study's theme of the role of education in empowering girls through agency.

In the non-formal educational learning environment the first one reviewed is Akili Dada, a leadership incubator that invests in girls and young women from underprivileged backgrounds who demonstrate a passion for social change. Through its programs of scholarship, leadership training, mentoring, and community service Akili Dada emphasizes experiential leadership education. This translates into education that is a prerequisite for development and leadership leading to empowerment.

BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihood (ELA) Program was chosen to illustrate how effective a non-formal educational setting can be transformative through its network of adolescent girls clubs. Focusing on life skills training, microfinance, and mentorship the girls are offered an opportunity for a better life. Unable to attend school for various reasons, this alternative is about building one's agency, building individual competencies, and empowering the girls to lead a better, more fulfilled, more prosperous life.

Let Girls Lead achieves scalable change for girls by investing in leaders and organizations through leadership development, organizational strengthening, and advocacy work. One example of their work is exemplified in the documentary *PODER* (Spanish for 'power'), an amazing true story of 'the power of the girl' and shows how a handful of young girls changed their community and the nation of Guatemala by advocating for and obtaining funding for health and education initiatives.

Although each program is country and context-specific, the overarching theme of adolescent girls' empowerment remains a dominant topic. The focus of the study will be formal and non-formal educational programs that aim to show the positive work being done globally to help advance girls' empowerment. The purpose of this study is to examine programs that have girls' empowerment as an objective in order to compare and contrast those approaches that will contribute to the dialogue of programs globally, specifically for marginalized adolescent girls. Each chapter is guided by the question, "How is formal education vs. non-formal education making a difference in certain contexts that is encouraging empowerment for adolescent girls?" The programs chosen illustrate the possibilities presently available to adolescent girls.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations to be considered. The study could have been enhanced by direct observation of the programs in action. This would have added clarity and brought a certain definitive analysis to the current findings. Additionally, by interviewing the girl participants and incorporating their voices, the study would have had more depth and credence in its evidence vs. extrapolating student participant quotes from journal articles, reports or websites. This would have provided more information on the effectiveness of the programs and the first-hand knowledge would have been powerful in speaking to the individual program's efficacy and to the subjective girls' experiences to the *process of empowerment*. "Empowerment must be explored in terms of individual's own experiences" (Shah, 2011, p. 94). Also, any challenges could have been imparted from direct questioning of the participants.

Oral interviews were conducted of some of the program's directors and/or staff as background that was most enlightening although further in-person observation and interviews, again, would have punctuated findings from the websites and journal articles. Within the different sections in the literature review I have tried to address the main topics that are integral to adolescent girls' empowerment but there is a need for more research on the intersections of learning outcomes, economic well-being, and gender.

Additionally, since this field of study is in its infancy, more research is needed on the efficacy of programs currently in place, both formal and non-formal. There are many programs addressing adolescent girls' and their lack of education due to factors spoken to above, but we need evidence from their results followed by adequate evaluation. This will contribute to the knowledge base and provide insight into the relationship between empowerment for adolescent

girls and education as well as intersections of other variables (e.g. rural vs. urban location, men and boys as part of a program).

### **Significance of the Study**

Despite the progress in enrolling girls in school, it is still the poorest girls living in rural areas who are the most in need of education. We are now past the Millennium Goals deadline of 2015 and on to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, we need to move beyond talking about securing primary schooling and expand the focus to secondary education and girls' ability to transition to a workforce and take on leadership roles. The global community needs to focus on what girls aspire to and deserve in their lives.

The link between education (both formal and non-formal) and empowerment will help illustrate the *process of empowerment*. Through examples of different NGOs and education models (formal and non-formal), educators, academics, and civil society will see how it is possible to empower adolescent girls through education while simultaneously benefiting local and global societies. These educational programs have empowerment potential to become a transforming force in lives of adolescent girls.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. Gender parity: the ratio of girls to boys at any given level of education, such as primary or lower secondary school. When there is between 97 and 103 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, it is considered to have an equal number of boys and girls and the system is said to have reached gender parity (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 75).
2. Formal schools/education: standard curriculum; set number of grades; common calendar; registered, licensed and accredited; run by government or NGOs (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 13).
3. Non-formal schools/education: nonstandard curriculum; flexible grading; flexible calendar; not necessarily registered, licensed, and accredited; run by government or NGOs (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 13).
4. Educational levels: Primary education: typically six years, but varies between four and seven years; Lower secondary: typically three years, but varies between two and five years; Upper

secondary: typically three years, but varies between two and five years (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 70).

5. Marginalized contexts: defined materially as impoverished and structurally as having inequitable policies or social norms (Monkman, 2011, p. 2).

Marginalization in education: an acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities (UNESCO, 2010, p. 135)

6. Formal education system interventions: these target students who are enrolled in programs that lead to a recognized educational credential (normally a lower and/or upper secondary school). Within this category there are three sub-groups of interventions: 1) formal NGO schools; 2) enhancements to formal schools; and 3) extracurricular programs that target students in formal schools. (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 9).

7. Non-formal educational interventions: these do not provide a formal credential but may provide a certificate of completion. These range in duration but are typically less than one year, and often target competencies (e.g. productive or social) rather than covering comprehensive national or regional curriculum. These programs may be single sex or coeducational. (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 10).

8. Developing countries: the bases for characterizing countries as “developing” are very fluid and controversial. Common traits include low living standards, low levels of productivity, high population growth and dependency burdens, dependence on agriculture and primary exports, and dependence and vulnerability in international relations (Sullivan, 2016, p. 148-149).

9. Adolescent: for purposes of this study, adolescence is defined as ages 10-19 (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 16).

10. Gender equality: equality between men and women; the freedom to develop and make choices unhindered by gender stereotypes, roles and prejudices. (UNESCO, n.d.). For school, it means equality of girls’ and boys’ experiences in the classroom and school community, their achievements in education institutions and their aspirations for the future. (UNESCO, 2010-2015, p. 155) and retrieved from

[http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3443&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3443&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

11. Gender equity: specific measures designed to eliminate: inequalities between men and women, discrimination and to ensure equal opportunities. Gender equity leads to equality. (UNESCO, n.d.). Retrieved from [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3443&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3443&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

What we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. (Hillary Clinton, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 as cited in Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 12)

This quote underscores the theme of this study, that is, to illustrate both the importance of and challenges to empowering girls to lead, to empower them to overcome barriers they may face as women around the world, including even in many developed countries (e.g. discriminatory laws, domestic violence, economic barriers, lack of job opportunities, and lack of political participation), in order that they become part of a positive cycle of education and empowerment for a lifetime of fulfillment and dignity. The hope is that this cycle carries on from generation to generation, beginning with a *girls'* high-quality education in order to succeed at all stages of their lives. This study will compare and contrast different educational approaches to empowerment in adolescent girls in both formal and non-formal settings.

Themes of the literature review will encompass empowerment, the education-empowerment link, gender equality, and the education-leadership/development link. These will be expanded on through the educational initiatives in Chapters III and IV that highlight the differences and similarities for each country-specific as well as each program-specific context as mentioned in the methodology section.

But what is a high-quality education? According to Sperling and Winthrop (2015, p. 253), education experts have defined a high-quality education through three main dimensions: (a) a focus on inputs (e.g. textbooks, computers in the classroom, and water

wells); (b) a focus on learning outcomes, such as students' ability to master educational content, often tracked through a learning assessment tool and with a heavy focus on foundational skills like literacy and numeracy; and (c) a focus on social learning outcomes (what can be referred to as 'soft skills') which include young people's beliefs about themselves and others, attitudes toward gender equality and gender-based violence, and their ability to communicate effectively with others.

This third dimension, social learning outcomes, is not as widely used as the first two but is of utmost importance to understanding the full ways in which education can empower girls and young women. It means gender equality is built into definitions and measurements of educational quality (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 253). The last point is key since the focus here is on adolescent girls empowerment (AGE) in developing countries where tradition and patriarchy can be barriers to the full development of girls and women.

### **Empowerment**

“Empowerment has become a catch-all term in the development literature, encompassing poverty alleviation, welfare, and community participation” (Ross, Shah, & Wang, 2011, p. 26). Additionally, the term is a contested concept, suffering from general usage that is often not theoretically grounded (e.g. used as a synonym for self-esteem, self-confidence; assumed to result from schooling) or is a fuzzy concept (Monkman, 2011, p. 5; Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 2) but is in its original usage considered a good thing in that it expands the capacities of marginalized groups. As an unquestioned good, a ‘motherhood’ term, comfortable and unquestionable, empowerment is often used as a panacea for social ills, including gender inequity (Ross et al., 2011, p. 26). Monkman

(2011) feels these superficial uses of the word undermine its ability to expose social processes that relate to gender equity and the process of becoming empowered.

Some history to the term empowerment follows. The origin of empowerment as a concept stems from the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1960s surrounding the work in civil disobedience and voter registration efforts to gain rights for African-Americans, and thereafter the term was applied to the women's movements in the 1970s (Stromquist, 1995, p. 13). Empowerment in its emancipatory meaning brings up the question of personal agency, links actions to needs, and results in making collective change, all of which raise the discussion around social justice and human rights (Stromquist, 1995, p. 13). The similarities among oppressed groups are important since they face marginalization by those in control who fail to see the seriousness of their situations and to work together to solve it—so, until that time comes, “the oppressed must themselves develop power for change to occur; power will not be given to them for the asking” (Stromquist, 1995, p. 13).

This concept of oppression and change is fundamental to Paulo Freire, whose philosophy espouses that in order for the oppressed to not fall prey to its force, one must turn on it and act on the world in order to transform it (Freire, 2000, p. 49). The point of departure must always be with those in the ‘here and now’ and starting from this situation they can begin to move and they must perceive their state as merely limiting—and therefore challenging (Freire, 2000, p. 85). The programs in this study are illustrative of this as they are challenging the system and the environment in which the adolescent girls live and function so they can lead more fulfilling, dignified lives in which agency and transformation are becoming organic to their well-being.

Much of the academic literature about empowerment refers to studies done relating to adult women and the domestic, political and economic worlds in which they exist (e.g. Kabeer, 1999; Rowlands, 1997; Stacki & Monkman, 2003; Stromquist, 1995). They have provided a solid foundation from which contemporary frameworks and theories appropriately address adolescent girls' needs and empowerment. For example, Kabeer (1999) finds that empowerment includes access to resources, agency in decision-making, and achievement of results that a person values. These ideas are also found in the current research of Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2015) and Bajaj (2009). What this study adds is information on the education-empowerment link and how it serves as a tool leading to choices and actions that contribute to an adolescent girls' sense of empowerment, her intellect, and her agency to go beyond the status quo. It is necessary to re-envision how girls' needs are thought about. They have been distorted by an infantilizing discourse that treats them (Ross et al., 2011, p. 26), "not only as 'childlike', hence without agency, but also as a homogenous (undifferentiated) group located within economic, familial and legal structures and the product of oppressive age and power relations" (Fennell and Arnot, 2009, p. 7).

Rowlands finds that individuals are empowered when they maximize opportunities available to them without restriction (1997, p. 13). They experience empowerment by the "processes in which they become aware of their own interests and how those relate to the interests of others, in order both to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and actually to influence such decisions" (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14). Hence, empowerment is more than participation in decision-making; it must also include the *processes* that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to

make decisions: the ‘power to’, ‘power with’, and ‘power from within’ are part of this process which involves undoing negative social constructions so that people see that they have the ability to work toward change, the right to do so, and the ability to influence decisions (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14). This is remarkably illustrated by the young girls in Guatemala, part of the Let Girls Lead initiative, who approached the town mayor requesting funding for girls’ programs (see Non-Formal Programs Chapter IV). By harnessing this untapped resource, the return to society provided an opportunity for themselves and the community to benefit. Some might resist girls’ empowerment because it upsets the status quo and prevents them from being taken advantage of by elites or structures that benefit from their oppression. This is an obstacle in patriarchal societies with traditions that question progressive thinking and actions that challenge such institutional systems.

Stromquist (1995, p. 13) also refers to empowerment as a process: to change the distribution of power, interpersonally and institutionally. Empowerment is a socio-political concept that goes beyond “formal political participation” and “consciousness raising” (Stromquist, 1995, p. 14) and must include cognitive, psychological, political, and economic components. These components are integrated into Murphy-Graham and Lloyd’s (2015) framework competencies as follows: Stromquist’s cognitive and psychological components (e.g. acquiring knowledge about gender relations and belief that they can make positive life changes) meshes with Murphy-Graham and Lloyd’s critical thinking and knowledge acquisition competency (enabling girls to analyze gender relations and be critical of social norms that lead to exclusion); Stromquist’s (1995) economic element (access to economic resources) and Murphy-Graham and Lloyd’s

(2015) productive competencies (e.g. financial literacy, entrepreneurship, agricultural/farming skills) both attest to how economic resources will provide a strong foundation for students to have an income source and be independent productive citizens.

These elements or competencies are developed as a result of an empowering education. The action component integral to both of these frameworks leads to an individual awareness and/or a collective action in both economic and social spheres. According to Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2015, p. 6), empowering education requires action, or what can be referred to as experiential education: this can be seen in roles and actions girls take to push back against the cultural constraints that limit them from achieving their full potential. The research in this study exemplifies action or agency, from the girls in a Mayan village in Guatemala advocating for health and education to Kenyan girls learning about and practicing leadership skills. The bigger picture in all of this involves multiple ‘players’: civil society, individuals, families, and government at all levels. But for this study, the focus begins with the individual girls, and hence involves their participation as ‘participants’, not beneficiaries. To truly be empowered one must be part of the process as an active participant in identifying the problem, the solutions and implementation (Stromquist, 1995, p. 15).

Empowerment can only succeed if its mode of learning is close to the women’s everyday lives and builds on what they bring to the table, how their experiences are incorporated into the process (Stromquist, 1995, p. 18). Since this study is about adolescent girls I expand this thought to include “girls” experiences in the empowerment process. This personalizes it and brings meaning to their lives. They have to be able to

see what impact it will have for them in the present and the future. They need to experience it for it to make sense to them.

### **The Education-Empowerment Link**

Although a fairly new topic, the literature on educational programs for adolescent girls' empowerment in developing countries is growing in scope due to necessity. The push for girls' education must have a special emphasis on empowering them to overcome the barriers women face that are listed in this chapter's opening paragraphs. Then we can be confident that the cycle will not be repeated. Education can be empowering but only if it is a high-quality one. How does education do this? One school of thought is that the skills girls acquire in school create "pathways" to better employment and health outcomes by socializing them with specific kinds of literacies and competencies allowing them to learn how to communicate, negotiate, and engage in a bureaucratic world (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 252). Hence, the economic return of the educational investment in girls propels them toward empowerment—and the corresponding benefits of doing so.

Rowland's (1997, p. 13) definition of empowerment includes four dimensions of power: "power from within", "power to", "power over", and "power with". Although this definition was created with women's empowerment in mind and is widely used by gender specialists, academics and practitioners, it provides a link to the intrinsic empowerment definition cited in Ross et al. (2011) that encompasses individual ("power within") and collective ("power with") processes working for change. In a study of girls' education projects in India and China, the authors capture how girls are using school-based lessons to understand, negotiate, and rise above obstacles associated with son preference, caste,

poverty, and rural life (p. 40). They ‘spoke up’ for their dreams in the India school as a result of the empowerment curriculum and ‘studied up’ for their dreams in the China school due to the disciplined, education priority, social mobility focus (Ross et al., 2011, p. 41). The latter school restricted students’ intrinsic empowerment and abilities to make strategic life choices. This points out the double truth of education: it can be empowering *or* constraining and thus provides a realistic starting point for the school/empowerment link (Ross et al., 2011, p. 28).

Within a framework of a high-quality education, we can concentrate on ensuring that girls both learn in school and leave school equipped with the power within, the power to, the power over, and the power with (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 254). This will go a long way to providing girls with an empowering educational background to be successful in whatever future they envision. This study offers insights and promising methods that create educational pathways and that promote gender equality and empowerment through education.

In her book, *Opening Minds, Improving Lives*, Murphy-Graham (2012) conceptualizes empowerment through education as a process of “recognition, capacity building and action” (p. 3). She proposes that, through education at its best:

Empowered individuals come to recognize their inherent worth, the fundamental equality of all human beings and their ability to contribute to personal and social betterment. They develop the capacity to critically examine their lives and broader society and take action toward personal and social transformation. (p. 3)

This definition of empowerment encompasses key elements of dignity, equality, action, transformation and critical thinking. Empowerment extends beyond one’s own internal transformation to include having an impact externally on the greater community.

Developing the capacity to critically examine oneself and one’s community gives

individuals the ability to see inequality and work toward social justice (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 137). Education that combines this critical consciousness with practical skills is integral to the empowerment process (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 137) and is seen in both the formal and non-formal programs in this study.

There are several points that many of the studies used in this literature review agree on regarding education and empowerment, as listed in Monkman (2011). They include:

- Education does not automatically or simplistically result in empowerment.
- Empowerment is a process; it is not a linear process, direct or automatic.
- Context matters; decontextualized numerical data, although useful in revealing patterns and trends are inadequate for revealing the deeper and nuanced nature of empowerment processes.
- Individual empowerment is not enough; collective engagement is also necessary.
- Empowerment of girls and women is not just about them, but perforce involves boys and men in social change processes that implicate whole communities.
- It is important to consider education beyond formal schooling: informal interactional processes and multi-layered policy are also implicated. (p. 10)

These are key to any program or initiative that is working toward adolescent girls' empowerment (AGE). Each program deserves its own action plan since the constituents will vary depending on the context and its own unique characteristics (e.g. country of origin, rural/urban setting, and informal/formal setting). To elaborate on the first point, not all educational experiences are empowering. The *process* by which education transforms dominant values and gender inequality is key to empowering adolescent girls. This is where the social and economic contexts in which the girls live, as well as how the education is taught, can impact the quality of the education. According to Murphy-Graham (2012, p. 91), schooling and education are not synonymous, though typically

schools provide access; but not all education is a source of empowerment given the range of educational program quality alluded to above. So, the question to ask is, “what kind of education?” when claims are made for a relationship between education and empowerment (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 92).

Some areas from which to learn and build on in the context of a quality, empowering education are: textbooks and learning materials need to reflect gender equality, teachers need to demonstrate and teach gender- equality, the need to provide girls with female mentors and role models, the need to strengthen girls’ negotiation and decision-making skills, and the need to provide avenues for developing their leadership skills (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 254; CARE, 2009, 2012). The following two chapters will show programs that illustrate these concepts.

By linking agency with action, Stromquist (1995) parallels Bajaj’s (2009) theory of transformative agency and Murphy-Graham and Lloyd’s (2015) change element as essential to the empowerment process. Belief in the ability to improve one’s own social mobility and transform one’s own societal elements is how Bajaj defines student agency and this ‘transformative agency’ helps students develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) to “respond to schooling in ways that express individual and collective action toward positive social change” (Bajaj, 2009, p. 552). In comparing two secondary schools in Zambia, one government and one private, the private school incorporated a ‘human values’ curriculum (e.g. peace, leadership, social justice, non-violence, cultural pride). The agency manifested itself in what seems to be attributed to the student’s schooling experiences: the intentional efforts of the private school staff to have a more educational

equity approach vs. the practices at the government schools which tended to reproduce social inequality based on economic background (Bajaj, 2009).

The idealism expressed in the student voices amplifies how they felt about their own agency. Quotes from students at the private Umutende School highlight this (Bajaj, 2009):

The advice they give us is to study hard so that we can make Zambia a better country in the future...I'd like to be a leader because I would like to improve Zambia and other countries so they can be developed. (Grade 7 student)  
 Since I was in grade four I have big things planned for my future...I have planned to be a doctor...in 20 years time I want to find the cure of AIDS. (14 year old)  
 My role in the community is to teach my other friends about what I learn...I also teach them about human values. (p. 558-561)

These career goals reflect a desire to improve their community and nation, which is part of transformative student agency (Bajaj, 2009, p. 558). This also indicates a belief in themselves, a power within, a self-confidence and critical awareness of the world outside of themselves, which is akin to intrinsic empowerment (Ross, Shah, & Wang, 2011).

When compared to students who attended the government school, there is a difference in future visions and their role in their community (Bajaj, 2009):

I have many plans for my future but the exam results will determine what I'll do...without money, one cannot further his education.  
 Looking at the current situation, things are no good...Zambia in 25 years can be developed or get poorer.  
 In my community people only come together when there is a funeral or...distribution of free rice. I play no active role in my community. (p. 559-561)

The curriculum, the school's philosophy, the teaching methods, and the 'culture' of each school is illustrated by what the students felt and shared. Their conceptualization of agency is based on schooling experiences. Daraja Academy in Kenya (in Formal

Programs, Chapter III) will further define this concept of agency in a formal school setting.

It is important to keep in mind that the effects of education on girls' empowerment and development will be mediated by social constraints that individuals cannot or can change only marginally. According to Murphy-Graham (2008, p. 46) while women might be empowered or have enhanced capacity for self-determination, the choices available to them are constrained by the economy, society and culture. By extension here, I include "girls" to show the connection between the two since girls do grow up to become women. Individual empowerment through education is the great equalizer and the long-term strategy to change social and cultural norms. It cannot, however, single-handedly change the boundaries within which women live, work, and participate in public spaces (Murphy-Graham, 2008, p. 46). Schools and other educational programs definitely have a role in promoting empowerment and challenging cultural norms, but they do not operate in a vacuum. Education's role in challenging cultural norms and social structures will be influenced by other institutions besides the governmental education departments (Ministries of Education), such as the family, the media, and religious organizations (Murphy-Graham, 2008, p. 46).

In DeJaeghere and Lee's (2011) research into rural Bangladesh's marginalized youth, they used a capabilities approach to understand what girls and boys feel affects their educational well-being and capacity for empowerment. This approach by Sen (as cited in DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011):

emphasizes a person's capability to lead the kind of life she values not only by the culmination of alternatives that she ends up with, but by the processes involved in making choices, or her agency freedom to choose alternatives within her ability and context. (p. 29)

Capabilities are the opportunities that one values and are used to develop actual well-being (DeJeaghere & Lee, 2011, p. 29). Sen articulates a capabilities approach to development as the “expansion of what a person is able to do and be” (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 12). Hence, development is about expanding a person’s opportunity to lead lives they value, and by extension, development is integral to empowerment. According to Murphy-Graham (2012, p. 13), education plays a critical role in the capabilities approach in development because it can expand what people are able to be and do. Martha Nussbaum (as cited in Murphy-Graham, 2012) developed a list of specific capabilities that are central for a person’s growth. Three of them deal with the opportunities education can help to develop: their senses, imagination, and thought; their ability to reason; and their relationships with and concern for others (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 12). Consequently, “education is seen as a way to expand women’s opportunities to live meaningful lives...education is seen as a way to empower women” (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 13). Through extension to include adolescent girls this concept provides the basis of this study.

Through her longitudinal research in Honduras studying alternative secondary education on adolescent girls and young women, along with her publication of *Opening Minds, Improving Lives*, Murphy-Graham documents a framework of: humanity, justice, human nature, gender equality, the role of knowledge, and the process of social change (2012, p. 37). With this as a foundation, Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2015) developed a conditions and competencies framework for AGE. The first condition requires the learning environment to be conducive to learning: children need to feel safe, both emotionally and physically (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015). Specific conditions can

differentially marginalize or empower, and these conditions have consistent gendered patterns: conditions of a safe, supportive, and quality educational environment foster possibilities for empowerment and well-being, and the lack of can keep children from achieving well-being through education (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011, p. 27).

The second core condition fosters the recognition of their dignity, meaning girls' innate right to be valued and receive ethical treatment, and their equal worth with others (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6). This builds self-esteem, a belief in their purpose in life, and prompting them to think of a future with choices available (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6). There will be a realization that they are not destined for a singular path that historically involves a future of early marriage and family, subordination to a man, and limited education.

In Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's study, the third condition of empowering education requires action, or learning by doing. This essentially involves agency, which according to Ahearn (as cited in Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6), is the culturally constrained capacity to act. Schooling experiences have the potential to enhance students' belief in their ability to transform their surroundings, their own upward mobility, and elements of their society – referred to as agency (Bajaj, 2009, p. 554, 564). Empowering education expands the actions girls are able to take as well as advancing their ability to critically analyze and contribute to community well-being (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6). This resulting 'action' of education is crucial to a girls' empowerment process since its purpose is to end their exclusion by challenging oppressive relationships and institutional structures as well as promoting social justice (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, p. 6). Action takes place by virtue of this framework, fostering habits of a social action

ideology and a philosophy that change needs to happen in order to advance their right to education for their full development.

Sen, as cited in Seeberg (2011, p. 44) views participation in the education process as developing ‘capabilities’ and ‘personal flourishing’ which denote human development and socially just change with the end result of education being empowering. A girl’s condition of being educated or her capability is a kind of “freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations or...to achieve various lifestyles” (Sen, 1999, p. 75). “Education is an unqualified good for human capability expansion and human freedom” (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007, p. 8).

Specific conditions can differentially marginalize or empower, and these conditions have consistent gendered patterns: conditions of a safe, supportive, and quality educational environment foster possibilities for empowerment and well-being, and the lack of can keep children from achieving well-being through education (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011, p. 27). “Being empowered through education depends on structural and relational supports particularly from parents, as well as from community members” (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011, p. 37).

Education encompasses social and cultural processes within and outside school settings. This broader contextual focus, along with interest in transformative learning processes, is essential to empowerment (Monkman, 2011, p. 2). Increased education expands choices but it needs to be made clear that the education must ‘open minds and improve lives’ (Murphy-Graham, 2012).

Formal education has a critical role to play improving gender identity through the removal of sexual stereotypes in textbooks, the cultivation of female mentors and role

models, and the promotion of gender equality in the curriculum (O’Neil, Plank, & Domingo, 2015; Sterling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 254; Stromquist, 1995, p. 19). These are a crucial precursor to the empowerment process as they set the foundation upon which behaviors and action rely (Stromquist, 1995, p. 19). Daraja Academy in Kenya (discussed further in Chapter IV) exemplifies this.

Non-formal education additionally plays a significant role for those students who have fallen out of the education pipeline for any number of reasons (e.g. early marriage, early childbirth, cost of education). Adolescent girls in these programs need exposure to the same female mentoring and role models, as well as opportunities for developing leadership and livelihood skills to gain the knowledge and the education that will prepare them for a future of fulfillment. This type of education will be covered in Chapter IV.

As Graca Machel, international advocate for women’s and children’s rights and former first lady of South Africa, stated at the 2015 Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship, “Investing in girls education is closing a circle of life: recognize that it is like planting a tree: fertilize it water it; continue to care for it, prune it, continue to care for the tree and look after it; the fruits will come later” (Van Oranje, 2015).

### **Gender Equality**

One cannot look at adolescent girls’ empowerment as applied to those who live in the rural areas in developing countries without seeing the intersection of multiple inequalities: poor, rural, and being born a girl. These girls have multiple strikes against them from the start and most will have an uphill battle to overcome one, if not all these inequalities. The role of human rights is crucial to the lives of these girls in order for them to experience education for full development of the human personality (United

Nations General Assembly, 1948). This study began with the focus on empowerment and education for girls, yet upon research, has strongly segued into gender issues in the different nation contexts with corresponding economic and social consequences.

Everything in this study revolves around gender and unless initiatives, funding, and programs build 'gender' into the targets and into the goals, then empowerment strategies will not be as strong as they could. Without gender equality you cannot have full development of the individual. According to Arbab and Arbab (as cited in Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 40), gender equality not only opens the door of opportunity for females but it replaces an attitude of domination with an attitude of cooperation.

Education is empowering, but as Urvashi Sahni, girls' education advocate and founder of the Study Hall Foundation in India, states, "When we switch from thinking about schooling improving learning outcomes for girls to school improving life outcomes for girls, we realize we must teach gender equality just like any other subject in the curriculum" (as cited in Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 251). Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's approach has its base in gender equality. Although their focus is on girls' education they realize that a "continued emphasis on girls may actually exacerbate gendered tensions and is an incomplete strategy to promote gender equality" (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, p.2). These may work in the short term but to have more lasting and permanent effects, it is imperative to include men and boys in this discussion in order to change gendered norms and relations so the underlying disadvantages experienced by girls can be fruitfully addressed (CARE, 2009, 2012; Monkman, 2011; Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 2).

Bajaj and Pathmarajah researched alternative educational initiatives in Zambia and India intended to result in rights-based social change as related to gender roles and gender relations, and found that “unintended consequences of such programs is the cultivation of differential agency of boys and girls”, resulting in privileged agency of boys in alternative education efforts (2011, p. 49). It is important for practitioners working in this field to remember that any attempt to explore and alter social inequalities that construct safe spaces may conflict with the lived realities of the participants (Bajaj & Pathmarajah, 2011, p. 50).

Entrenched systemic inequalities can make change difficult to attain. Much work remains to be done in areas where patriarchy and traditions have left girls and women challenged to overcome a historical precedent of struggling to achieve their right to education. At the Umutende School in Zambia the pedagogy and policies are intentionally designed to disrupt gender inequality and the curriculum addresses women’s rights and other topics promote messages of social justice and equity (Bajaj & Pathmarajah, 2011, p. 55). Examples such as the mandatory activity by both sexes of school cleaning exemplifies one way of undoing gender at the school and additionally, students actively engage in practices and roles that defy traditional gender roles and allow gender to slowly “come undone, and identify sites of resistance and new formations” (Bajaj & Pathmarajah, 2011, p. 55, 64).

“Resistance to convention is contingent upon agency, yet the manifestation of resistance and transgression depends on the social, economic, and cultural context” (Bajaj & Pathmarajah, 2011, p. 62). As stated elsewhere in this study, education does not exist in a vacuum and one must look at the full context of the society in which adolescent girls

live in order to understand the complexities of their lived realities. Understanding and ultimately dismantling structures that authorize and perpetuate inequities are paramount for scholars and practitioners in international development concerned with social justice and gender equity (Bajaj & Pathmarajah, 2011, p. 64) and ultimately, human rights.

Sperling & Winthrop (2015) cite multiple pathways of education that empower girls to lead and would increase their empowerment:

- Textbooks and learning materials reflect gender equality.
- Teachers demonstrate and teach gender equality.
- Provide girls with female mentors and role models.
- Strengthen girls' negotiation and decision-making skills.
- Give all girls the skills to work.
- Provide avenues for developing girls' leadership skills.
- Empower girls through sports and extracurricular activities. (p. 254)

Empowerment is not simply about self-esteem or other individual characteristics; it is about developing capabilities that enable engagement in social change processes (Monkman, 2011, p. 2). According to Kabeer and Moser, development that does not provide opportunities to challenge inequitable social relations (e.g. gender relations) remains a tool of social reproduction, not of social change (as cited in Monkman, 2011, p. 2).

With reference to girls' formal schooling and empowerment, Ross et al. (2011) conceptualize empowerment as a process by which girls, who have been denied resources and experiences—limiting their capabilities—are able to make practical and strategic life choices. With the influence of the empowerment models of Rowland (1997) and Stromquist (1995, p. 19), Ross et al. (2011) argue that intrinsic empowerment is crucial to the development of girls' capabilities in schools and should be the foundation for school programs that support them (p. 26).

The programs selected for this study work toward providing the adolescent girl with a positive self-perception. Without this fundamental belief—that one is entitled to education in order to be able to develop the full potential of the human personality (United Nations General Assembly, 1948)—one cannot begin to know the possibilities. In essence, they are being short-changed. Here is where education can play a positive role.

### **The Education-Development/Leadership Link**

Empowering adolescent girls to lead must involve an education system that places a focus on the soft skills (e.g. critical thinking, collaboration, communication) and leadership skills that are critical to: success in jobs, a more dignified family life, and promoting political change (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 195). Education can be empowering, but it will be more so if we integrate teaching empowerment and leadership skills to girls. Singh notes (as cited in O’Neil, et al., 2015, p. 7), “leadership and empowerment are closely related” – and such concern about identity, gender roles and power relationships provide a link between leadership and empowerment theories.

According to a literature review on women and girls’ leadership by O’Neil, et al. (2015, p. 4), studies on empowerment and leadership found an emphasis on personal and collective change among leaders, society and those that follow them. This ‘change’ is reminiscent of the individual and collective action mentioned earlier (e.g. Bajaj, 2009; Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015; Stromquist, 1995). CARE’s Girl Leadership program defines a girl leader as an active learner who makes a difference in the world, and acts both individually and collectively with others for positive change (CARE, 2009, 2012). This program has three pillars: a) realizing the power within (similar to Rowlands, 1997)

which includes girls developing five competencies: voice/assertion, decision-making/action, self-confidence, organization, and vision and ability to motivate others, b) gaining legitimacy, which involves relationships and girls gaining respect in public spaces, and c) taking action, which is about influencing others and creating an enabling environment (CARE, 2009, p. 19).

CARE's leadership development model is premised on a theory of change that is structured on both formal and non-formal education and their external influences (e.g. social networks of girls, girls' participation in civic action, role models for girls, and their exposure to harmful patriarchal traditions). This theory of change is based on a gender empowerment framework of individual change (agency), relational change (e.g. mentors and developing mutual support for change), and structural change (e.g. safe spaces, challenging behaviors/laws) (CARE, 2009). When girls are exposed to an education, there will naturally be learning opportunities for the academic 'hard' skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy skills) but the learning environment is also a space to learn the 'soft' skills which include leadership skills and a respect for the community (family, school, civic). When girls are able to participate in activities that are collective in nature—that benefit others than themselves—they are being trained to be agents of change for the greater good; this is empowering for them. It is fostering a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) and their agency is being developed through the skills, knowledge, and confidence they are gaining through the educational experience that leads to social transformation, for themselves and those they support. This helps them realize their own rights (to education, health, etc.), and for this study, their right to an education for the full development of their personality (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

In the literature review of O'Neil et al. (2015, p.2), evidence on enabling and constraining factors for girls' leadership addresses the importance of childhood experiences: family background, female role models, formal and informal schooling, and out-of-school activities. These are in line with findings from other research in this chapter. Family background includes the importance of having male siblings and 'more open-minded' fathers to be an enabling factor for leadership capabilities and conversely, the lack of family and community support is an obstacle to girls' leadership development. It is interesting to note that the family financial and emotional support was proven to be more important than targeted gender education programs in one study (O'Neil, et al, 2015, p. 11). Several studies also point to the importance of female role models outside of the family, including teachers, uneducated women with non-academic strengths and talents, and community leaders (O'Neil, et al., 2015, p. 11). The programs in Chapter III and IV (Akili Dada, BRAC, Daraja Academy, Let Girls Lead, Camfed) are excellent examples of the significance of female role models as well as mentoring they provide.

Formal schooling is not only important for academic learning. Sperandio's (2000, p. 57) qualitative research in Uganda secondary schools found the "provision of motivation and opportunities to learn how to be a leader" to be an important part of the hidden curriculum of effective education, including ways that support girls' gender equality. For example, schools can promote beliefs, values and expectations that equip students to take on leadership roles in the future or provide training by appointing pupils to positions of student leadership (Bajaj, 2009; Sperandio, 2000). This is fostering agency in the students by encouraging them to become involved in their school and community resulting in the development of leadership potential. Schooling can be empowering for

adolescent girls in ways other than the provision of academic credentials. Daraja Academy in Kenya (Chapter III) has a program that incorporates leadership development all four years at the secondary school.

Non-formal education and out-of-school activities also can contribute to girls' leadership development, and hence, their empowerment. Girls in CARE's leadership development program learn five essential leadership competencies (referred to above) through a series of extracurricular activities that they help to design and there was a significant percentage (more than 50%) who demonstrated positive change as measured by CARE's Girl Leadership Index (O'Neil, et al., 2015, p. 11) BRAC, one of the programs in Chapter IV, is an excellent example where non-formal schooling in several countries reaches marginalized populations. It has programs geared specifically for girls that have proven very successful in teaching them about empowerment and livelihood skills for their full development (Bandiera, et al., 2012).

Although it should begin at an early age, leadership training ought to be continued and expanded for girls at the secondary level. *In Keeping the Promise: Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education*, Rihani sees primary education as "a significant accomplishment but an unfinished road for the developing world girl child" (2006, p. 7). Secondary education "equips students with critical thinking, enabling civic participation and democratic change" (Rihani, 2006, p. 2). Leadership essentials are reinforced, expanded, deepened, and made more sustainable at the secondary level (CARE, 2009, p.7). With keeping a developing country context in mind, although the thought of having young people as today's leaders coincides with such a philosophy in Northern societies where they have very public roles in everyday life, the same is not true for many parts of

the developing world (CARE, 2009, p. 11). In such places, young people are discouraged from managing tasks or organizing others as a matter of deference to elders in their communities and families. Traditional cultural beliefs in many parts of the world tend to make it even less likely that girls would be encouraged to participate in a leaders-for-today type leadership model. This subtle difference may have significant impact on how leadership development programs are structured and thought of in developing country contexts. (CARE, 2009).

In CARE's (2009) study on leadership for adolescent girls it was found that leadership programs appear to be more successful when, in addition to providing the leadership opportunities, they also included structured activities for self-reflection and discovery. These opportunities help youth see how their efforts result in positive changes in their communities. (See Chapters III and IV for examples). Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2006) found that girls must be well acquainted with themselves and critical of the status quo in order to lead. They "equate critical reflexivity with empowerment because it might enable girls to challenge discourses that help sustain women's subordination to men" (Currie, et al., 2006, p. 420). It is important to be mindful that in some of the developing countries where patriarchy and traditions are obstacles for girls' development, there are safe spaces where girls are supported to help them grow. Additionally, BRACs ELA program, which is discussed in Chapter IV, exemplifies this; BRAC also has a new program it is experimenting with in Tanzania where girls who have been out of school can come to safe spaces for academic as well as livelihood skills training, called "study clubs." So far the anecdotal evidence is positive (Mithila, 2015).

## Summary

Education remains an important factor that feeds a supportive environment for girls. This literature review illustrates how complex a quality education can be for adolescent girls in developing countries and how it is dependent on the institutions that control the educational systems as well as traditions that can either promote or constrain education for girls. Empowerment and leadership for girls can be transformative and it is imperative that existing education programs keep adolescent learning needs in mind. Gender equity is the key to unlocking adolescent girl power.

Education has the potential for empowering young girls and giving them opportunities that will open up their minds to improve their lives. In various ways and contexts, post-primary education has the potential to provide confidence, self-esteem, knowledge, and a sense of purpose and dignity to adolescent girls. Empowering education is a process that involves multiple layers and includes action or agency on the girls' part.

There are no simple solutions nor is there only one solution to promoting adolescent girls' empowerment and leadership. Through thoughtful programming and curriculum development, and giving voices to the girls, inviting them to be part of the process, they will have an opportunity to flourish and learn, whether that is in a formal school setting or in non-formal school programs. Providing access to these is the first step to empowering adolescent girls and the trajectory will follow, hopefully toward development of their full potential.

### CHAPTER III EMPOWERING EDUCATION IN THE FORMAL SETTING

This chapter introduces two dynamic programs that illustrate how empowerment and leadership can be fostered through formal education. The first program, Camfed, was selected due to its new *My Better World* curriculum that serves to complement formal academic curriculum in schools. The second one, Daraja Academy, serves to illuminate what can occur when young girls are exposed to an innovative education-leadership/development model woven into the daily fabric of life at a private boarding school.

Both models incorporate imaginative pedagogy that serves to motivate and inspire adolescent girls to continue their secondary education. Through female role models and mentors, extracurricular activities, and learning materials that promote gender equality and build competencies, the young students are primed to learn from gender-responsive teaching and opportunities allowing for leadership qualities to develop and for the empowerment process to be nurtured.

#### **Camfed**

The Campaign for Female Education (Camfed) is an international non-profit organization that, since 1993, has been dedicated to the eradication of poverty and inequality in Africa through the education of girls and the empowerment of young women as leaders of change (Lake, 2015). It targets the rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) “to reach the most marginalized girls, for this is where girls’ education has transformative potential and the most marginalized girl is an important barometer for the education system and for society at large” (Lake, 2015, p. 7). Camfed began by subsidizing costs for adolescent girls’

education through scholarships but it has expanded its work to have a more holistic focus that includes: building multi-stakeholder partnerships; early childhood development and education; a primary school safety net fund; complementary and extra-curricular programs; and post-secondary and tertiary support (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 13). Camfed strives to empower girls through access to education, and access to social and economic opportunities that they have been deprived of (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact Section).

Girls in these sub-Saharan Africa countries face many challenges, often intersecting, that negate their success to advance toward economic, social, and intellectual potential and empowerment. Early marriage, teenage pregnancy with its possible health complications, early exposure to HIV/AIDS, a patriarchal system that favors boys completing school and where girls are seen as needed in the home more for traditional domestic work all contribute to school drop-out (for both primary and secondary school) that prevent access to a quality education. Some statistics to illustrate the environment and gender issues girls face as well as the lost potential of an education: while only four percent of literate girls are married by age 15 in sub-Saharan Africa, more than one in five who are not literate are married by this age (UNESCO, 2014, p. 181); 60% of girls do not attend secondary school in Ghana, 50% of girls in Malawi and 42% in Zambia are married by age 18, in Tanzania only 37% of girls progress to secondary school, and in four of the five countries where Camfed works, the girls experience sexual violence between 13-18% (United Nations Population Fund, 2012).

There is a history of an “inter-generational cycle of poverty that passes from a poor mother to a poor child,” all too predictable, yet far from non-preventable...which is what Camfed’s work is addressing (Camfed, 2010, p. 4).

The recent extra-curricular program, *My Better World* (2013) and the 2013 launch of Camfed’s Learner Guide initiative are highlighted and discussed below. They are wonderful examples of the transformative power of education, agency, and unleashing new potential through young women’s empowerment and leadership.

The premise of the Camfed Model is one of effecting systemic change. By investing in girls’ education and supporting them to go to school (to complete primary *and* secondary school) and helping create the context for them to transition from school to a safe and secure livelihood, it increases their ‘agency’ (Bajaj, 2009) and teaches them leadership skills. Thus, these young women are at the forefront of a movement for change and are part of a new constituency of leaders and activists, which in turn raises girls’ aspirations and success. (Lake, 2015, p. 8). Hence a virtuous cycle takes place ending with empowered and active citizens.

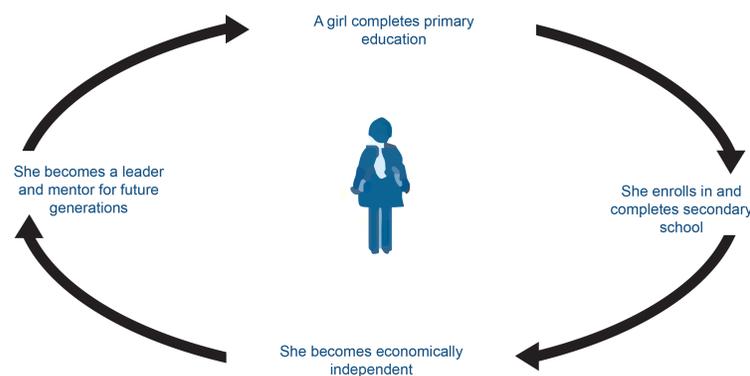


Figure 1. The Virtuous Cycle  
Adapted from Camfed Strategic Plan 2015-2019, 2015

The other part of the model incorporates a power sharing approach that engages communities around girls' and young women's welfare through involvement in the delivery and monitoring of programs. This allows for a crucial space to negotiate power dynamics and gendered roles (Lake, 2015, p. 9), two cultural elements integral in developing countries. Through this local inclusive partnership infrastructure all constituencies are brought together to ensure the girl child's right to education is fulfilled. Leading members from each partner form a Resource Team comprised of: Camfed Association, School Management Committees, Community Development Committees, and Mother Support Groups. This team leads the expansion of activities to new districts through peer training and mentoring while monitoring progress to ensure quality (Lake, 2015, p. 9). This supports Camfed's capacity to scale up by spreading to new areas.

The Camfed Association (CAMA) was founded in 1998, in partnership with Camfed's first 400 secondary school alumni, to provide young women a bridge from school into safe livelihoods in a society where poverty, early marriage, and urban migration in search of employment are threats to young women's health and security (Camfed, 2010, p. 16). It is a peer support network for young women school graduates from rural areas who are actively engaged in assisting school children in their own communities and is a growing pan-African movement with membership in 2014 at 24,436 and is expected to number over 130,000 by 2019 (Lake, 2015, p. 3). They are reinvesting the benefits of their own education back into their families and communities and contributing to the cycle of positive change.

The School Management Committees, which includes marginalized rural parents, administers school level activities as well as provide training on financial management

and child protection. The Community Development Committees are at the district level, comprised of staff from the Ministries of Education, local traditional leaders, school officials, and Community supported organizations; these committees coordinate the communication with government and non-formal institutions. Mother Support Groups are made of women who have come together to protect the welfare of orphaned and vulnerable children in their communities and also to strengthen the links between home, school and community (Lake, 2015, p. 9).

The purpose of this section is to feature Camfed's new extracurricular life skills program, *My Better World* (in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Ghana), and its Learner Guide Program. Through this Learner Guide Program, young women who have graduated from secondary school with Camfed's support, return to their local schools, support marginalized children in their studies and deliver a uniquely tailored life skills and wellbeing program (*My Better World*) to both girls and boys, usually in a mixed classroom setting. They volunteer a minimum of 2½ hours per week at the school for 12 to 18 months (12 months in Ghana; 18 in the others: per a Camfed official, personal communication, February 28, 2016) and serve as teachers of this special curriculum (explained below). In the process, the learner guides acquire valuable skills that open up pathways to leadership and advocacy in support of girls' education, girls and women's empowerment, as well as gaining work experience as teaching assistants (Lake, 2015, p. 22). Evidence of the power of CAMA and of the Learner Guide Program as cited by a participant: (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program, Stories, para 13):

Floriana looked after herself and her three siblings since she was six years old, when her mother became ill, and was selected for Camfed support through secondary school. Floriana became a Learner Guide the year she graduated and joined the CAMA alumnae network. As the only female teaching assistant at her

school, she has become more of a matron, dealing with vulnerable girls' issues, and working with teachers to generate enthusiasm for the *My Better World* Program, making sure boys, as well as girls, engage with the curriculum. Floriana supports her three siblings with school going costs and wants to be a qualified teacher.

In the school where I serve as a Learner Guide, there are no female teachers. People consult with me about education issues in the village. When opportunities to serve come from the government, people nominate me first. I was asked to lead the initiative to obtain national identification cards for everyone in my village.

The learner guides are trained in delivering livelihood skills, as well as psych-social support. They work with schools, communities and district officials to keep at-risk children in school and help them overcome their challenges. These young women are learning community mobilization skills, are looked on as teachers, as mentors and role models by the students. In the process they are becoming leaders, they are becoming empowered by realizing their capabilities, by experiencing the *processes* of empowerment that allow them to influence decisions: the 'power to', the 'power from within' (Rowlands, 1997). They are undergoing transformative agency (Bajaj, 2009), and learning through action (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015), both of which support the empowerment process by contributing to ending exclusion and promoting social justice. The emphasis on action lays the foundation for participation in social movements that influence change in private and public sectors (Batliwala as cited in Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 7).

The girls are looked upon as equal to the other teachers and by both the families of the Learner Guides and communities they serve. Schools and government leaders are proud of them as well. "I feel very valued, very respected" according to one Learner Guide (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video) which is

indicative of intrinsic empowerment (Ross, et al., 2011) taking place. Per a Camfed official (personal communication, February 28, 2016) feedback also shows:

They are reporting they have gained status in their communities through this opportunity. Among those who have not renewed to carry on as Learner Guides, most have gone on to further education or have been hired into education-related jobs. It has been a very empowering program for them.

Why are the Learner Guides effective in helping these girls? Key to this program is that the guides are former students in the schools they serve so they are familiar with the environment, the teachers and the challenges of that school, and they have experienced the same issues the current students are faced with (e.g. poverty). That provides a common bond from inception that makes for a smoother relationship. “They have walked in their shoes” (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video). Given that the guides have just graduated secondary school they are very close in age to the school girls and that makes it easier for trust and confidence to occur, allowing the Learner Guides to lead students in the support they need (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video).

In return for their investment of time, Learner Guides benefit from access to interest-free loans to start or grow local businesses through online micro-finance provider Kiva, on the premise that they are repaying interest ‘in-kind’ by volunteering in the schools (Lake, 2015, p. 23). They also have access to a mobile technology platform to connect with other Learner Guides. The benefits of this program are multiplicative in nature: the students benefit from the curriculum, the volunteers gain valuable teaching experience and advancement of their own education, and the community reaps the benefits of jobs created as a result of the loans for the businesses of the young women. Additionally, the profits of the business help support the Learner Guides families with

domestic needs and for siblings to go to school (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video). The access to Kiva loans has been very economically empowering for them (per a Camfed official, personal communication, February 28, 2016). This program has far reaching effects as the empowerment process extends beyond the Learner Guides own internal transformation as evidenced by the impact on their family and on the greater community. They are developing an awareness of who they are, what they can do, and who they might want to become as they are helping to educate the next group of young men and women. Additionally, leadership qualities are being developed, and this initiative encourages young secondary school graduates to give back to their communities, reinforcing their integral place in society. Like the hidden curriculum referred to earlier, these soft skills are extremely important to one's development.

In 2014 there were 2,575 CAMA members trained as Learner Guides, they partnered with 1,009 secondary schools that implemented the program, and 87,600 students were introduced to the *My Better World* curriculum (Camfed, 2013). Learner guides receive an intensive two-week residential training program on the new curriculum that focuses on supporting young people to navigate challenges and improve their life chances. The resources were developed by Camfed and Pearson Education, along with youth in sub-Saharan Africa, speaking to their own experience and challenges. The Learner Guides also connect with local education authorities to ensure they have the necessary tools and support to conduct the program. In Tanzania, the government and schools allow it to be taught as a subject during regular school hours and in Zimbabwe, it

is taught as an extra-curricular class at lunch or after school, so the attendance is not mandatory (per a Camfed official, personal communication, February 28, 2016).

The *My Better World* curriculum and workbook help secondary students to discover their talents, build resilience, learn how to set and achieve goals, deal with challenges, and learn about inner strength and leadership. It focuses on individual qualities, personal competencies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015), health and wellbeing. According to N. Duke, Program Manager of Camfed Tanzania, the Learner Guide program “is empowering a young person with self-recognition, to know who they are, what their talents are and how to use them effectively, what they are capable of, and if they have challenges – give them problem-solving skills” (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video). It is about making their life better through instruction on both livelihood and soft skills that are fundamental for adolescents to learn about and experience.

This is done through reflective questions in writing prompts and discussions with others. It is a thought-provoking and creative way to educate students about their present life and what they want for the future. It is giving them tools for change; it is about possibilities for transformation, critical examination of their lives, recognition of their worth, learning about the fundamental equality of everyone; it is about “opening minds and improving lives” (Murphy-Graham, 2012). As the introduction states (Camfed, 2013):

This is the start of a journey... a journey in which you will: explore and discover things about yourself, other people, and the world around you. Like all good journeys you might find some of what lies ahead quite challenging. But don't worry, when you feel challenged it means you're learning! And like all good journeys... it's good to share your experience. (p. 4)

It is composed of two parts. The first part of the “journey” is about understanding wellbeing, picturing a life you want to live and live in. Topics (or steps as they are referred to) include: basic human needs; autonomy and competence; self-esteem; belonging and respect; fairness; happiness; money and work; family, friends and community; and rights, laws and social norms. It is about improving your life, making your world a better place, and creating a better world while recognizing how your wellbeing is connected with everybody else’s wellbeing (Camfed, 2013). Emphasis is on how we need to connect with others, understanding your influence on the world and the need to make choices that will help others. How clearly this points out the need to look outside ourselves to be engaged and to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) through a human rights lens.

The second part of the book is about looking “at the strengths you have (your inner powers) that can help you achieve – or move towards – your *Better World*” (Camfed, 2013, p. 14). Steps include: controlling emotions; being conscious of yourself and others; being empathetic, open-minded, collaborative, civil, communicative, tolerant, forgiving, resilient, responsible, curious, wise, reasonable; and thinking critically (Camfed, 2013). Feedback from students in Tanzania is very positive (94% of students report it has been helpful or very helpful for them personally; 93% of girls and 90% of boys say that it will help them do better in their exams (per a Camfed official, personal communication, February 28, 2016).

The workbook is a tool to help students see their inherent worth, to help them develop their own powers that will propel them toward a more prosperous future. It is about them believing in themselves and helping them see the power that comes from

inclusion, from working with others and realizing that they have the ability to succeed. *That* is the empowerment process.

In order to formally recognize the achievements of the Learner Guides, Camfed is partnering with Pearson Education and working to develop a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) vocational qualification to certify 5,000 Guides. This is in the works for 2016 (Camfed official, personal communication, December 3, 2015). These are portable, transferable qualifications recognized in over 100 countries and would enhance Learner Guides future employment options. This partnership is also collaborating with schools of Education to secure fast-track transition to formal school teacher training for Learner Guides so ultimately these young women can be hired as qualified teachers in their home communities (Lake, 2015, p. 23). Clearly, Camfed has the foresight to realize that for significant and sustainable change in developing countries it must involve a working partnership with the larger community: family, private sector, and government school systems as well as utilizing its own CAMA talent pool. By incorporating the BTEC certificate into their strategies, they are providing a bridge for these young women into formal higher education, teacher training, and employment, “in the hopes they will return to their rural communities where there is a lack of teachers, especially a need to keep female teachers” (Camfed, n.d., Our Impact section, Learner Guide Program video). This illustrates the development of competencies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015) and the economic component in the empowerment process (Stromquist, 1995) as to the importance of these resources to be independent human beings with dignity and having a sense of fulfillment.

Camfed's goal of having 5,000 Learner Guides reaching over 150,000 girls to improve their attendance, retention, and learning at secondary school exemplifies a number of qualities of the organization: 1) "scaling up" has been achieved since its inception, beginning in Zimbabwe and now reaching five countries with the goal to expand to South Africa and Mozambique by 2019; 2) by scaling up, the educational opportunities and leadership development are multiplicative by empowering more young women to be leaders of change in confronting poverty and inequality, and helping them in that crucial transition from secondary school to adulthood; 3) with the rapidly growing network of young women who are uniting to transform prospects for young people, the CAMA network is giving back to their communities and living the virtuous cycle of the Camfed Model with a mission of impacting widespread systemic change (Lake, 2015).

Of utmost importance and integral to the Camfed mission is sustainability. Without it an organization will not survive. Camfed recognizes that to achieve long-term transformation in girls' prospects, this necessitates transformation of their context (Lake, 2015, p. 11). The legacy of Camfed's approach is a changed environment to a new equilibrium in girls' communities, where girls are valued as equal citizens and there is capacity to tackle obstacles to their education. This is embedded in new forms of community 'capital' which multiplies the returns of the initial investment in girls' education and provides for sustainability. This capital is comprised of: financial (monetary and in-kind donations), institutional (local infrastructure of service providers, local authorities and community groups), social (voluntary community activists) and knowledge (the girls themselves seen as 'experts') capital (Lake, 2015, p. 11).

Camfed's integrative model takes advantage of these forms of capital in their framework that is a very holistic way to approach a solution benefiting the girls they support, the schools they work in through the Learner Guide program, and the broader communities they are part of. Because the program is locally managed by volunteers, it belongs—and is widely perceived to belong—to the community (Camfed, 2010, p. 43).

Camfed's innovative and critical power-sharing model is a partnership between the communities, government, and families that is crucial to its success and is enabling it to take it to scale. They are on the cusp of truly embracing and implementing a new movement for girls' education. In their Strategic Plan 2015-2019 (Lake, 2015), Lydia Wilbard, founding member of CAMA in Tanzania, and now Co-Director of Camfed Tanzania, states:

At Camfed, we recognize that young rural women have potential and that they are at the centre of their own development. We understand that they know what they need. But what they also need is for someone to believe in them, because that leads to them believing in themselves. And when they believe in themselves, they can do so much...(p. 27)

Camfed understands the valuable role education plays for girls, and in particular, adolescent girls. It is inherently important for adolescent girls to have the opportunity to continue to develop intellectually during the crucial secondary school years. The next program, Daraja Academy, will show how it is empowering young minds for a more dignified and fulfilled life ahead through its secondary education model.

### **Daraja Academy**

Daraja Academy is a boarding secondary school for 120 of some of the most exceptional Kenyan girls from homes of material poverty who are provided with a strong academic foundation, a women's empowerment curriculum, and an environment to grow

their leadership skills. Daraja means “bridge” in Swahili, and the Daraja Academy (located in a rural area about 120 miles outside of Nairobi) is a bridge for the girls to become leaders in their communities. The school was started by a young couple from San Rafael, California in 2009, who, while traveling in East Africa, had seen first-hand that access to education was extremely limited for so many girls because of the financial burden that school fees would impose on families. Jason and Jenni Doherty, co-founders of Daraja Academy, wanted to improve gender equity in educational access and have now witnessed four graduating classes of strong, empowered, intelligent young women who are instructed in an academy with a holistic education focus (Daraja Academy, 2015c, Home section, Our Story).

Daraja has a unique educational model of four components that fosters girls to become agents of change in their communities. The first component is the selection process. Daraja Academy endeavors to build a culture of peace by having a diverse student body. Currently there are girls from 32 of the 42 Kenyan tribes and from multiple religious backgrounds. The students must demonstrate a financial need, interview with a committee, and have strong 8<sup>th</sup> grade Kenya national exam results. The intent is to recruit those with academic and leadership potential. Interview questions include: “What would you change about your community and why” (Daraja Academy, 2015f, What we do section, Student Selection, para. 2). Students are accepted because they show innate leadership qualities, desire for an education, and the belief that they are the hope for their family, community, and country. Beginning with the interview process, Daraja demonstrates that they are looking for girls who have potential to develop critical

thinking skills, and the personal, social and productive competencies for empowerment (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015).

The second component is community service. Each girl performs 30 hours per year of community service in the nearby community that gives them an opportunity to become part of delivering a solution to aid a local need. These range from tutoring elementary school children to helping out with workshops on HIV prevention or sustainable farming techniques. These experiences empower the girls to see how integrated they can become into the local community's needs and are looked on favorably by the local residents who benefit from these services (Daraja Academy, 2015a, What We Do section, Community Service). It is a good model for a healthy school-local community partnership. This service learning chain has great potential to affect change in the community as well as in the girls, and illustrates both agency (Bajaj, 2009) and the development of social and productive competencies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015).

The third component, the Women of Integrity, Strength, and Hope (WISH) curriculum is a truly unique part of the educational model. It is a four-year empowerment course taught weekly that is designed to cultivate community leaders and agents of change. The first two years focus on 'inward reflection' that teaches girls about individual strengths, self-esteem, how to deal with any previous traumatic issues, and how to identify potential future pitfalls (Daraja Academy, 2015h, What We Do section, WISH). These kinds of skills provide a foundation upon which the rest of their schooling can pivot from and is evidence of Murphy Graham & Lloyd's (2015) core conditions: the need for a conducive learning environment (where they feel emotionally safe and supportive in order to learn and become empowered) and the recognition of a girls'

dignity (which fosters self-esteem and personal efficacy). This WISH program also contributes to a girls' personal competencies development, according to Noddings, "to critically think about strengths/weaknesses, habits, talents...to support students in cultivating their innate strengths and dispositions so as to maximize their potential contributions to her social well-being" (as cited in Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 8).

The second two years of WISH focuses on 'outward facing skills,' which helps girls engage locally to see how they can be leaders in their community while learning about their role globally, and what impact they can have on both communities. Classes include sex education, public speaking, and career and leadership development (Daraja Academy, 2015h, What We Do section, WISH). This phase of their learning contributes to their sense of seeing their role in relations to others, how they are interconnected globally as well as learning through action, known as experiential education (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015). Personal and social competencies are developed as the girls are engaging in behaviors, thoughts and habits that contribute to their overall sense of purpose and how they can contribute to society (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015).

WISH is based on a peace building methodology and in human rights education. International women peacemakers, as well as Kenyan women serving as role models, are invited to speak to the girls about their own careers and the important role of education. Speaking to the significance of the WISH curriculum, as quoted by an alum of Daraja Academy:

The most influential part of my Daraja education was what I learned through WISH classes. They have been a bridge to my success and my career choices. The leadership and peace-making skills I developed have enabled me to face life's choices. Cate, Class of 2012. (Daraja Academy, 2015h, WISH Section, para. 4)

Daraja Academy is an example of Bajaj's (2009) transformative agency framework, that is, the ability of students to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) and respond to schooling in ways that express individual and collective action towards positive social change. The school promotes an ethos of critical thinking, social responsibility and encourages students to be involved; it requires such action (community service component and in the WISH program). The WISH curriculum is a critical curriculum in that its focus on empowerment and leadership fosters agency and development of the girls' identity, which is crucial during adolescence. Before one can transform a community, one needs to have a solid understanding of oneself, a belief in the "I can" philosophy. It starts 'within' first then pushes 'outward' towards the community.

In conversation about the WISH program (Daraja Academy official, personal communication, November 3, 2015), she stated that for the girls it was important "how we make her look at herself as a woman, to be a leader, how do you manage your job. The girls have a lot of self-drive so they want to succeed at this and in school." The curriculum continues to evolve as they find more tools to enrich it and is touched by everyone at the school. Daraja truly is a very inclusive, respectful community.

The fourth component is a Transition Program, which supplies a very practical element in the girls' lives. In Kenya it is mandatory to have a gap year between secondary school and university due to limited student spaces in the universities. This fifth year provides an education in life skills training, an internship, and more community service, in the hope to resolve future barriers that Daraja graduates may encounter. It is five months long beginning with a three-month classroom-based setting followed by a

two-month internship at a local business, organization, or school. It encompasses several topics: career exploration, home economics, personal finance, integrity and ethics, citizen responsibilities, business and computer skills, and community leadership (Daraja Academy, 2015g, What We Do section, Transition Program).

This transition phase is both a creative and logical step as it puts into action everything the girls have learned over their first four years. It combines academics (hard skills) with the soft skills (e.g. leadership skills, integrity) and is a continuation of the social responsibility underlying the school's vision of developing leaders who will transform their respective communities and the world. This encourages student agency, an action that will "improve individual social mobility and transform elements of one's society" (Bajaj, 2009, p. 554), in essence, transformation of both the student and the community toward positive social change. The desire to improve one's community is an important aspect of transformational student agency connecting agency to community development (Bajaj 2009) and of Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's (2015) competencies framework.

As part of the unique culture at Daraja there are after school clubs that promote girls' activism, such as Grassroots Leadership, Debate and a Peacebuilding Club. The Peacebuilding club was begun by five students, who were inspired by Kenyan peacemaker, Alice Nderitu, commissioner in Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission, who came to address the school for a one-day seminar in 2013. Since many of Daraja's students come from conflict regions in Kenya, the training sparked the idea for the club—so the girls could have regular peace education conversation at school. It gave them an immediate opportunity to create peace and a hope for continued peace in

their home communities (Daraja Academy, 2015d, What We Do section, Our Unique Model). Currently there are about 20 students in the club (Daraja Academy official, personal communication, November 3, 2015).

This kind of program, a school-based, student initiated Peacebuilding Club, is evidence that Daraja Academy students are flourishing in an environment where creativity, intellectual curiosity, leadership training, and the empowerment process are all being nurtured. The school is cultivating young leaders and at the end of five years they are being sent into a world they never could have imagined at the beginning of their Daraja education. The Peacebuilding club is indicative of student's own belief in their agency to make positive changes in the present as well as in the future for peace in Kenya.

Results of Daraja Academy's success can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. In conversation with a staff member (Daraja Academy official, personal communication, November 3, 2015), when asked about measurement of girls' empowerment, she said:

It is a qualitative measure: how are the girls doing upon graduation, how will they be in the society and the global society. Girls are looking at leadership in a positive way; some come back to Daraja Academy to teach voluntarily, to teach in the WISH program, others teach at home levels. I hear feedback from outside contacts that girls want to be an icon in their community. I hear from the girls themselves that they are grateful that WISH enabled them to handle this (certain situations). They are amazing girls.

Daraja's last graduating class performed so well on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exit exam (a three-week testing process) that each girl will be going on to university or college (Daraja Academy, 2015e, Daraja's Blog section, KCSE Results). This is a first for the school and a game changer for the girls who prior to

attending Daraja had relatively little hope they would even have an opportunity to attend secondary school let alone college. Overall results show: 1. Daraja Academy ranks in the top 10% of Kenya's 1,233 private secondary schools and its students rank in the top 10 in district exam scores for math and physics. 2. Thirty percent of the first graduating class of 2012 holds leadership positions. 3. Daraja students have performed over 250,000 cumulative community service hours throughout Kenya. 4. UNESCO has recognized Daraja Academy as a progressive and innovative school of excellence with exceptional results (Daraja Academy, 2015b, Our Results section).

Daraja Academy has adopted four pillars – statements of value – that guide the school's effort to create a community of peace and building bridges with other people. These pillars are for the entire school community to live by: faculty, staff, and students. They are (Daraja Academy, 2015d, Our Unique Model):

- Be accountable for the role you play at Daraja, neither neglecting it, nor abusing it.
- Maintain open communication, speak honestly and listen effectively.
- Embrace differences and treat all with dignity and respect.
- Every day, leave it better than you found it.

These values are integral to the school's success for both staff and students. The girls who attend Daraja Academy are cognizant of the opportunity they have been given and by all accounts are succeeding in learning academic subjects but also learning how to become responsible, socially conscious citizens of Kenya and the world. As one student said, "I believe after changing my community that people will see the good qualities in me and they will elect me as a representative in the society" (Rick, 2012). Through the

opportunities to help others, society can be transformed by human action; the students at Daraja are conceptualizing agency because of their schooling (Bajaj, 2009, p. 560).

It is clear that the intentional efforts of Daraja Academy to educate girls to be leaders, to feel empowered to achieve whatever they set their minds to, is *because* of the holistic education focus. The school goes beyond the academic preparation model of education to include important concepts of agency, responsibility to self and community, and a belief in oneself to succeed. There is a transformation taking place at Daraja Academy; one that is creating agents of change, peacebuilders, and one that is providing girls with the tools to become confident, intelligent and caring individuals for the future.

### **Conclusion**

As research continues to expand on the importance of secondary education for girls, especially in the developing world, there will be more investments by participating NGOs, the private sector, and governments that provide evidence on the positive relationship between years of education and various economic and social outcomes. Ultimately, the goal is for formal education as this model provides the greatest resources for innovative pedagogy leading to a comprehensive range of competencies, capabilities and intellectual capital benefitting the students.

Camfed and Daraja Academy are representative of what is being done today to help adolescent girls actualize the empowerment process. This is done through their emphasis on strong, well researched, and creative curriculum, the development of leadership skills, the provision of an experiential education, and one that fosters agency in the girls. One of the most significant problems in developing countries is a failure of education systems to realize the potential of girls. These two examples show potential is

possible when resources for transformative positive change allow for the human right to education and for the girls to have opportunities to achieve their full potential.

## CHAPTER IV EMPOWERING EDUCATION IN THE NON-FORMAL SETTING

As stated in chapter one, sometimes non-formal education is the *only* opportunity available for adolescent girls. In the push for secondary education for girls we don't want to leave behind those who have dropped out or never had the chance to start education along with the rest of their age group—especially because of the increasing evidence showing that alternative education paths for girls are important (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 194).

Empowerment must involve undoing negative social constructions, so that people come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and influence decisions (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14). The following non-formal education programs illustrate how effective a non-traditional educational setting can be in promoting leadership, ingenuity, agency, and confidence in adolescent girls as well as providing them an education for a productive life and one full of potential. From Akili Dada teaching leadership in Kenya, to BRAC teaching leadership and livelihood skills in Uganda and Bangladesh, to Let Girls Lead witnessing the will of empowered girls in Guatemala, one can see the adolescent girl leading others and experiencing the empowerment process.

### **Akili Dada**

Akili Dada (AD) is a Kenyan NGO based in Nairobi, Kenya. In Swahili, one of Kenya's primary official languages, Akili means intellect, ability, strategy, knowledge, and competence. Dada means sisterhood, a term of endearment, and familiarity among women. Hence, Akili Dada means a sisterhood of intelligent young leaders. It was founded in 2005 by Dr. Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Africa. During her dissertation research on women's

rights in Kenya, Wanjiru realized the extent to which women's voices – particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds – were missing in the policy and decision-making processes affecting women's lives in Kenya. Access to such positions typically required university education, strong mentors, and leadership experience – all beyond the reach of most underprivileged young women. Kamau-Rutenberg set out to bridge that gap. AD is a leadership incubator investing in high-achieving young African women from underprivileged backgrounds with a demonstrated passion for social change and for empowering the next generation of African women leaders (Akili Dada, n.d.-d, About Our HerStory section).

AD is building a sisterhood (called Dadas) of creative, responsible, articulate and critical thinkers dedicated to changing the world around them via four strategies: leadership development, financial investment, skills training, and mentorship (Akili Dada, n.d.-e, About Strategies section). This is accomplished through two core programs. The Young Changemakers Program for girls ages 13-19 works to develop them as leaders in their schools and communities, and the Innovation in Leadership Program is for young women ages 18-35 (this program will be briefly covered given its scope is outside the adolescent age for this study).

To give context to the Kenyan education system and to some of the issues that young girls face, a brief background is provided. For some, education for girls is not valued as a priority for family or community investment in Kenya. The difficulties girls and young women face in education originate from a combination of socio-economic, political and cultural factors, all contributing to the dearth of Kenyan women leaders.

Gender issues in Kenyan education originate from the impact of colonialism on the low status of women when compared to men (Chenge & Sifuna, 2006, p. 133). Women in many African societies were deliberately sidelined in the provision of education as well in other sectors of social and economic development. History plays a huge role in the patriarchal tradition that prevents so many girls from attaining a secondary school certificate and advancing on to university.

According to Warrington & Kiragu (2012, p. 302), primary education in Kenya has witnessed phenomenal growth since the introduction of free primary schooling in 2003. But as Bagaka's (2010) points out, although the vast majority of children are attending school, completion rates are relatively low, estimated at 45% between 1990-2000 (p. 588). Entrance to grade 9 is highly competitive and is based on the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) performance rates. Only 47% of all students moved on to secondary education in the early 2000s (Bagaka's, 2010, p. 588). Secondary education was made free in 2008 by abolishing school fees but the indirect costs (e.g. lunch fees, books, uniforms) are significant challenges for poor households (Warrington & Kiragu, 2012, p. 305). The system is even more selective at the end of grade 12 based on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance rates. Kenya's dozen or so universities can only accommodate 11% of all students who take the KCSE exam or about 37% who qualify for university (Bagaka's, 2010, p. 588).

Culture and gender roles play an important role in family decisions to send children to school, particularly in rural areas. There are lower literacy rates, (Bagaka's, 2010, p. 586), girls are expected to finish school at a young age, and traditions such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and the need to stay home to perform household

chores, negatively impacting school attendance. Pedagogical factors such as poor methods of instruction and the perceived irrelevance of education contribute to high dropout rates, especially for girls (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

When girls don't attend or complete secondary school this translates to fewer women going on to university. Education can promote economic and social development for the community and the nation as well as the individual. (Vavrus, 2003, p. 27). Education for girls and women can also contribute to create gender equity in the labor market.

### *Young Changemakers Program*

Dadas in this program are provided the space and support to develop their personal leadership style, learn how to identify issues and areas of need in their communities, and build tangible skills to address those issues. The program is multi-faceted and includes: comprehensive scholarships, mentorship, leadership academies, service learning, and a gap year component.

Akili Dada provides 100% funding for the entire duration of a girls' (known as Scholars) high school education. It targets young girls (rural and urban) who have already been active in and established a track record of serving their communities. Through partnerships with six of the top performing National Schools, AD currently has 56 scholars at all-girls public boarding schools (National Schools) near or within Nairobi (D. Sinar, personal communication, March 22, 2016). They are given the opportunity to attend and complete secondary school without worry of having to drop out due to the cost. To explain National Schools (D. Sinar, personal communication, March 18, 2016):

National Schools are like magnet schools in the U.S. with top tech and resources and teachers and they are highly competitive. Akili Dada scholars are

girls that scored high on KCPE and qualify for top national schools but cannot afford to pay tuition.

Mentorship plays a crucial role within Akili Dada. By providing opportunities for girls and young women to connect with each other and across generations, AD is building a community and a pipeline of women who support each other (Akili Dada, n.d.-b, About Strategies section). Mentorship at AD relies on an extensive network of volunteers from a wide range of professional sectors who provide an extra support layer that helps keep track of the progress of the scholars.

There are Akili Dada Leadership clubs at each of its six partner schools that allow students who are not AD Scholars to participate in service activities and group mentoring sessions. In 2014, there were 50+ students in each club for over 300 high school members (D. Sinar, personal communication, March 18, 2016). Those 300 members directly impact 1400 other non-AD club high school girls. Those girls, in turn, take the information and skills they learned and interact with other girls, reaching over 4200 indirectly impacted high school girls (Akili Dada, 2015). Those 4200 reach out to five community members - either through community projects Dadas do or in the household – to her sister, mother, friend, etc. that totals to about 20,000 people (D. Sinar, personal communication, March 18, 2016). This is an example of fostering agency (Bajaj, 2009) in the girls and helping them to “develop the power for change to occur” (Stromquist, 1995, p. 13) in their communities due to the transformation in themselves.

Akili Dada has an annual Dadas Lead Conference that inspires the girls and young women across its different programs through a platform of learning and sharing from accomplished African women leaders about their leadership journeys. In 2015 the theme was “Mentorship Matters” which further emphasized the role and significance of

mentorship in helping shape African women leaders. Forums like this are helping to change the narrative of African women's leadership (Akili Dada, n.d.-a, Blog section, Dadas Lead 2015: Mentorship Matters) and it "enables individuals to increase their awareness of social inequalities and the conditions of subordination ... while helping them develop the capabilities that allow them to implement social change" (Shah, 2011, p. 93).

Akili Dada's leadership development focus is rooted in the belief that transformative leadership is cultivated through serving others and AD programs equip girls and young women with the resources, support, and experiential learning (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015) to allow for that. In the Young Changemakers Program there are Leadership Academies, four-day residential workshops held three times/year that focus on leadership training and other lifelong learning practices that adolescent girls can use as they mature in age and experience (Akili Dada, n.d.-f, Program section, Young Changemakers). Recently, one was on Feminist Leadership and it included topics such as: activating agency as advocates for gender equality, the role of emotional intelligence in transformational leadership, and included self-reflection sessions (Fitha-Amlak, 2015)). Reflection and self-awareness are key to girls being well acquainted with themselves and to be critical of the status quo in order to lead (Currie, et al., 2006, p. 420). Dadas are encouraged to assume leadership positions in the schools and their communities. Linking agency with action is reminiscent of the change element as essential to the empowerment process (Bajaj, 2009; Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015; Stromquist, 1995).

Leadership is central to ADs mission and vision, integral to its programs in developing young girls and women. Akili Dada looks outward with a global lens and ties leadership training to the development needs of both Africa and the girls' lives to emphasize their role in local communities and beyond. Leadership academies equip the girls with information and inspiration to allow them to grow as agents of change and see for themselves how they can transform themselves and those they serve and lead, preparing them with the "power to" and the "power within" (Rowlands, 1997) to make such change.

With a community service ethos, AD embraces a vision of leadership in service to others in its desire is to catalyze social change. During school holidays AD scholars are required to implement a project in their home communities, thus ensuring scholars remain rooted in their community and in touch with local needs. This is an example of what can occur when young women's agency is cultivated and they are given resources and the power to influence decision-making to achieve results they value that relate to the interest of others (Bajaj, 2009; Kabeer, 1999; Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015; Rowlands, 1997). The girls are empowered as active participants in identifying a problem, a solution, and implementation (Stromquist, 1995).

In the required gap year before university, AD incorporates internships, college preparation, and experiential service learning for both AD alumnae and non-alumnae to prepare girls for leadership in university and beyond. The 2015 gap year interns established a library at a local primary school through a two-month social media fundraising and book drive campaign (Akili Dada, n.d.-b, Blog section, Library Agenda). This is the empowerment process in action as a result of the education and trainings

received inside and outside formal school, that provide development of the capacity to critically examine the community and oneself to see inequality and work toward social justice (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 137). In August 2015, AD alumnae and gap year interns went to a secondary school in Eastern Kenya where they facilitated a mentoring session around role models and self-awareness creating a positive learning environment for girls. The students created a vision board (inspired from a recent AD alumnae leadership academy) of their role models, participated in conversations on strategies they could take to stay on track in high school, and had a goal setting session (Akili Dada, n.d.-c, Blog section, Paying it Forward,). The Dadas are developing a critical consciousness (Freire 2000) by looking at ways they can inspire change in others.

Akili Dada's central focus is on leadership and how its young Dadas can acquire the skills to access key decision-making roles and leadership positions. Through a framework of individual change (agency), relational change (e.g. mentors) and structural change (e.g. safe spaces for empowerment and leadership knowledge), AD programs reflect CARE's leadership development model (2009, 2012). These strategies, outcomes, and results lead to a positive impact on the Dadas and their communities.

#### *Innovation in Leadership Program*

This program for young women ages 18-35 has three components: a Fellowship Program, Career Preparedness Workshops, and Young Women Leadership Development. It is included in this section to illustrate the work Akili Dada does beyond the adolescent years but as a continuation of its focus on developing more women for leadership in Kenya and the African Continent. The Fellowship Program grants one-year seed funding

to young women leaders from East Africa engaged in social change projects. There are also mentoring and network resources provided.

The Career Preparedness Workshops are for recent university graduates to provide skills and networks to help them in the job market. The Young Women's Leadership Development focuses on emerging leader workshops for student and community leaders. There are also Dada Dialogue events to create space for young women from various backgrounds to discuss global issues from the perspectives of lawmakers, scholars and other practitioners to foster a development of their own voices in leadership. Alumnae and gap year students are also invited to participate in the Leadership Academies along with the Scholars.

Akili Dada is a community of young female leaders driving creative solutions to challenges in their communities. AD is incubating a social entrepreneurship spirit in the Dadas that supports both advocacy in helping their communities as well as agency in themselves. Through the transformation in the girls and young women there is an enhancement of their capabilities (Sen, 1999, p. 75), contributing to "her freedom to achieve." *This* is leadership and empowerment by girls and young women working for change to meet the need for more African women in leadership. According to Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, "Leadership is not accidental but rather must be nurtured with intention and purpose. As a scholar activist, Akili Dada is my purest expression of the personal as political!" (Akili Dada, n.d.-d, About Our HerStory section,).

With all the young people in the world today and half of them being girls and young women, it is imperative they have choices and opportunities to be agents of change, to have exposure to leadership potential in order to make positive contributions

to the growth of their communities, local and global. The next program, BRAC, is an example of such an organization that started local and grew to become an exemplary model of an international development success.

### **BRAC: Empowerment and Livelihood Program for Adolescent Girls**

BRAC, formerly known as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is a Bangladeshi NGO (by most measures the world's largest NGO) dedicated to ending poverty by empowering vulnerable populations, especially women and girls, and focuses on education and health in 12 countries, primarily in Africa and South Asia. It has developed an Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) Program for both in- and out-of-school adolescent girls operating in six countries: Uganda, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Liberia and South Sudan (BRAC, 2014b). This program focuses on two areas: the provision of life skills education (personal and social competencies) and the provision of livelihood skills/vocational training (productive competencies) which illustrate Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's (2015) framework of core competencies and core conditions.

Research from Uganda (Bandiera et al., 2012) described below, demonstrates that this approach is effective in reducing risk-taking behavior (e.g. having sex unwillingly, pregnancy knowledge) but also is empowering girls with information and skills to help them reduce their exposure to economic, social, and sexual activities that could hurt their life outcomes (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 263). Evidence suggests the program components are complementary to each other: girls are more likely to be receptive to health-related education (knowledge and behaviors) when they simultaneously receive new income generating skills (Bandiera et al., 2012, p. 5).

ELA began in Bangladesh in 1993 under the name of Adolescent Development Program (ADP) and was so successful that BRAC used that model to scale up, tailor it for Africa (more emphasis on financial literacy, livelihoods and microfinance), and created ELA that now spans five sub-Saharan countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. As of November, 2015 there were almost 350,000 girl members and close to 11,000 clubs in all six countries (BRAC USA, n.d., What We Do section, Empowering Adolescents). These clubs are not school-based but rather operate as “adolescent development clubs” in the treated communities where they can reach girls who have dropped out of school and might be vulnerable to risky behaviors as well as for girls enrolled in school. These spaces are often housed in single rooms either donated by the community or rented by BRAC and operate outside of normal school hours.

The ELA program typically includes 20-35 girls, ages 11-21 (P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016). They meet in the afternoons five days per week with a female mentor, chosen from adolescent girl members, who is in charge of club activities (as the program progresses, the frequency decreases to three days/week but it varies from country to country per P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016). In addition to the vocational and life skills training, there are recreational activities at the clubs, such as singing, dancing and staging dramas. Hence, the clubs are serving as a “safe” space for girls to socialize and talk about areas of concern that help to develop their non-cognitive skills (Bandiera et al., 2012, p. 7) as well as build confidence, instill a sense of self-worth, encourage positive behavioral changes, and improve their quality of life. Many of the older girls who have dropped out of school receive training on income-generating skills and some are trained as mentors to the younger girls. The premise behind the clubs is to

socially and financially empower vulnerable adolescent girls (BRAC, 2014b). For younger girls, the emphasis is on social skills development and creating a savings mentality. By mid-teens there is a demand among the girls for livelihood training, financial literacy and microcredit loans.

Social empowerment means giving the girls the confidence they need to assert themselves and resolve conflicts, making them aware of their rights and training them in health and gender issues, including family planning and reproductive health. Girls learn the importance of staying in school and avoiding early marriage and pregnancy (BRAC, 2014b, Social plus financial empowerment section, para 1). To expand on the rights portion of the training, (P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016):

The rights education is about the rights over their body and their own decision-making powers. Financially they have the right to their own money and to manage their own finances. This is done through the life skills modules taught by trained mentors.

Financial empowerment principles include – how to learn, earn and save – along with livelihood skills training, business planning, and budget management. Loans are given to the older girls and BRAC has discovered that with financial literacy and livelihood training, loans can be a very effective tool that allows these young girls to be economically empowered (BRAC, 2014b, Social plus financial empowerment section, para 2). Economic and social empowerment for the girls is providing them agency, which is a critical component of the empowerment process (Bajaj, 2009).

ELA clubs offer an opportunity for a better life through mentorship, life skills training, health education, vocational training, and financial literacy. The country models are pretty similar and the topics are generally the same while some might be contextualized (P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016). Teens can discuss

problems with their peers in small groups and build social networks, away from the pressures of family and male-centered society (BRAC, 2014b, How do clubs work, para 2,) while gaining skills that lead to training on income generating activities for financial independence and empowerment. These safe spaces can counter the patriarchal society from which so many girls come, and hence, work toward the gender empowerment that is key in external influences (e.g. mentors and girls clubs) promoting change (CARE, 2009).

Vocational skills training consists of a series of courses on income-generating activities informed by local market conditions: agricultural crop training, poultry rearing, and other non-farm businesses such as small trades, tailoring, and hair-dressing, all taught by hired professionals or BRAC staff. Girls are able to select an area of interest.

Although many skills may lead to wage or self-employment, more focus is put on girls gaining skills to become self-sufficient and creating their own small-scale enterprises (Bandiera, et al., 2012, p. 7). Additionally, financial literacy (e.g. budgeting, accounting) courses are taught to coincide with the skills training. This vocational training illustrates Stromquist's (1995) economic component and Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2015) productive competencies, both integral to the empowerment process as contributing to the girls' income source and consequently, their ability to be independent, productive, and active participants.

Key topics included in the life skills area are: sexual and reproductive health, pregnancy, family planning, rape, HIV/AIDS awareness as well as enabling (or soft skills) topics as management skills, negotiation and conflict resolution, leadership among adolescents, and a final class on legal knowledge on women's issues such as child

marriage and violence against women (Bandiera et al. 2012, p. 7). Classes are taught by trained mentors and/or BRAC's own professional staff.

BRAC Uganda underwent a two-year randomized control trial of the ELA program to study its efficacy. Some background will provide context to the program where nearly 4,900 girls (both those enrolled in school and those who had dropped out) were tracked. Uganda has a population with over 60% under the age of 20 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015b). The country has one of the highest rates of young women out of the labor force. It has the second highest child dependency ratio in the world. Relative to females in the same age range in wealthier economies, fertility rates (the number of births per 1,000 women) are three to four times higher in Uganda, and this gap is starkest for younger women (Bandiera et al., 2012, p. 3). Additionally, though government education is free in Uganda, the school fees, uniforms, and books are prohibitive for some families leading to girls dropping out or not even beginning secondary school and for some, even primary school (BRAC, 2014b, Typical challenges section, para 1).

Bandiera et al. (2012) found that adolescent girls in Uganda are struggling with labor force constraints but also face severe health related challenges that make it even more difficult for them to become economically empowered. They are dealing with early marriage, early pregnancy (with teenage pregnancy estimated at 30% per BRAC, 2014b, Typical challenges section, para 1), and exposure to STDs and HIV infection. These issues limit the girls' ability to attend school and find gainful employment. Additionally, the lack of job potential reduces incentives for young girls to attend school and obtain other types of training. Consequently, adolescent girls get married early and have

children, increasing their dependency on men. This cycle of early pregnancy and lower economic outcomes can be curtailed, and by demonstrating that there are income-generating opportunities for adolescent girls, there will be significant impacts on younger girls facing the same decisions (Bandiera et al., 2012).

Bandiera et al. (2012) concluded that the program had strong positive impacts on economic, health and agency outcomes for the girls. Findings include: increased participation in income-producing activities by 35%; self-reported condom use by those who were sexually active increased by 50%, pregnancy rates dropped by 26%; and there was a 76% reduction in adolescent girls reporting having had sex against their will during the past year.

The struggle to halt the cycle of uninspiring employment opportunities, early marriage and adolescent pregnancy leading to untrained and economically inactive girls in Uganda is consequential (Bandiera et al., 2012). The ELA program demonstrates the effectiveness of a combined life skills and vocational skills training. This multi-pronged intervention underscores the importance of testing and scaling up comparable approaches that address the personal agency, health and economic challenges faced by adolescent girls in environments similar to Uganda (Bandiera et al., 2012, p. 29).

Embedded in the ELA program is the importance of building girls' capabilities (Sen as cited in Dejaeghere & Lee, 2011; Murphy-Graham, 2012) that actualize her well-being and contribute to her development and empowerment. Through training in livelihood skills, vocational skills, and microfinance, the ELA program illustrates what can occur when adolescent girls are given the tools for an improved quality of life. They

are being taught empowerment through the acquisition of job skills and learning about economic independence.

Community and family support is integral to this program as any major step towards girls' empowerment must involve those inside as well as outside her family. Community elders attend club meetings, opening ceremonies, and the wider community continues to be involved through Mother's forums and other meetings. (BRAC, 2014b, Social empowerment section, para 3). Mother's forums are meetings for mothers of the girls usually held once/month at which they are informed of the club activities and educated on topics such as the girls' rights, child marriage, and gender-based violence. This makes the mothers feel more involved and they let their daughters come to club without objection (Per P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016).

To emphasize the importance of the family and communities role to ELA's success, (P. Ekram, personal communication, March 13, 2016):

No matter how independent the girls are they still need approval from their parents to attend the clubs, especially the younger ones. To gain the support from parents and the communities we hold community meetings and parents meeting prior to the club set up to give them an idea about the clubs and also to make them feel like they are a part of the whole process. Some of the club spaces are even donated by the communities. They appreciate that the girls are safe during the afternoons and it gives them a piece of mind to know where the girls are.

The ELA program is an innovative way to educate adolescent girls who otherwise might not be exposed to alternative educational possibilities. ELA is the fastest growing program in BRAC operations outside of Bangladesh. Interestingly, in Bangladesh, there are a number of trade-specific training programs which have led to girls breaking the gender barrier in traditionally male-dominated fields, like driving and motorcycle repair

(MacMillan, 2014). This is just another example of how BRAC is helping girls achieve intrinsic empowerment (Rowlands, 1997; Ross et al., 2011).

BRAC plans to deepen and expand its adolescent girls' empowerment programs with a goal of 400,000 additional girls to ensure sustainable economic independence (BRAC, 2014a, Latest News section). With this mission, BRAC is striving to reach more rural, marginalized, young girls in order to expose them to an education that benefits them. BRAC realizes that to bring these girls into the world of non-formal education, it must contextualize learning that meets their needs and their situations. Working within their realities BRAC is fostering the dignity, self-esteem, and giving adolescent girls a belief in their purpose in life (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6).

The last program featured, Let Girls Lead, served as the impetus for this study. The adolescent girls from Guatemala are an inspiration to what can happen when girls have the conviction, the leadership capabilities and the empowerment process skills to demand and succeed in achieving change in their community.

### **Let Girls Lead**

The Let Girls Lead (LGL) non-profit organization is based at the Public Health Institute in Oakland, CA, a leader in world health and development. LGL runs several projects that together are building a global movement empowering girls and their allies to lead social change through advocacy, education, storytelling, economic empowerment, and strategic partnership (BLE Solutions, 2013, p. 1). Since 2009, LGL's innovative model has contributed to improved health, education, livelihoods, and rights for more than seven million girls in Africa and Latin America through the passage of national laws, funding and programs (LGL, 2013b).

LGL identifies visionary local leaders doing powerful work, and provides them with resources, networks, funding, and training to drastically scale their impact (Let Girls Lead, 2016). LGL advocates for girls through partnerships in collaboration with several organizations in their operating countries. They believe that girls are not victims but rather powerful leaders and inspiring agents of change. An external evaluation found that LGS's girl-centered advocacy efforts resulted in: passage of national and local laws; policies, programs, and funding that protect girls from violence; an increase in access to education, health services, and economic opportunities; and programs that empowered young women to develop their own solutions to obstacles they face (BLE Solutions, 2013). The following project in Guatemala is one example of their advocacy work.

Guatemala has a population of 16 million (World Bank, 2014), nearly half belong to an indigenous Mayan ethnic group among which only 14% of indigenous girls finish school, and more than half are mothers by the age of 18 (Cole, 2015). Through the support of a LGL Adolescent Girls and Leadership Initiative (AGALI), 15 indigenous girls, led by Elba Velasquez and Emelin Cabrera, from Concepcion Chiquirichapa in the Western highlands of Guatemala, convinced their town mayor to invest in girls' development, ensuring their rights, safety, health, and education. In 2013, the girls' success was captured in *PODER* (Spanish for "power"), a LGL documentary about this girl-led advocacy that had its U.S. premiere at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. These young girls fought against widespread discrimination and for their rights, resulting in a transformation in their own lives, their families, and their community, a clear example of transformative agency (Bajaj, 2009, p. 558).

This story of girl-centered media advocacy serves as a global advocacy and awareness-raising tool about girls' power to lead social change (LGL, 2013b, p. 13). The girls advocated for their rights and became community leaders. AGALI partnered with a local grassroots organization, the Association for Research, Development and Education (IDEI) and implemented an after school 12-month capacity-building program for 9-16 year old indigenous girls in Conception. The first two months was the awareness stage meeting four times per week followed by eight months of the development stage (identify themes such as education and health) meeting two times per week (all sessions were two to four hours each) (J. Garcia, personal communication, April 18, 2016). IDEI works throughout the Western Highlands of Guatemala on health, education, research and infrastructure projects, using strategies grounded in community participation, gender equity, human rights, and cultural respect. The girls were educated in leadership skills and became aware of their role in influencing decisions, their right to do so, and their ability to work toward change (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14).

Many of the girls had little formal education but learned skills working with AGALI and IDEI to advocate with local authorities to promote policies for adolescent girls' health, education and development. How was this accomplished? This was done via newspaper interviews, community organizing, attending municipal assembly meetings with government officials and traditional community authorities, and through public speaking. Television and radio covered their campaign, and ultimately the mayor paid attention to them. This tactic of utilizing media to educate others about the girls' mission is effective since it reaches many more people and the media is a key player in

influencing the role of education's role in challenging cultural norms and social structures (Murphy-Graham, 2008, p. 46).

The girls created several commissions to involve all segments of the communities in the advocacy initiative, including: the Protection Commission, which organized talks with parents about violence prevention; the Participation Commission, which provided information about peer counseling, organized youth mural painting projects, and ensured direct youth participation in the advocacy process; and the Health Commission, which conducted bilingual radio programming in Mam and Spanish to provide young people and their parents with information about sexuality, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and teenage pregnancy (LGL, 2013a, p. 3). IDEI ensured that print and radio media representatives covered the girls' major events to promote local and national awareness of the initiative. It was only seven months from that initial knock on the mayor's door to his signing legislation to fund education and health care efforts for girls in 2012. Their capabilities were expanded through the opportunities valued by the girls and acted on in order to become the person they are able to do and be (Sen as cited in Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 12).

This type of advocacy is effective because it involves the girls as prime change agents, demonstrating intrinsic empowerment (Ross, et al, 2011). Similar to the school girls in India (Ross et al., 2011) who 'spoke up' for their dreams, these Guatemalan girls 'spoke up' for their rights to education and health care and made their efforts materialize. The training built the girls' capacity to raise their own voices and advocate directly with government decision-makers. This is an example of empowerment as a process of recognition, capacity building and action where individuals recognize "their ability to

contribute to personal and social betterment...and take action toward personal and social transformation” (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 3).

Ultimately, their efforts were rewarded and the mayor signed legislation developed by him *and* the girl advocates. The Conception mayor allocated 0.5 percent of the total annual municipal budget to open a Municipal Office of Childhood and Adolescence to ensure the implementation of girl-friendly policies. The office responds through individual casework and organizing activities related to education, recreation, health, and culture (BLE Solutions, 2013, p. 16). Some of the projects have included: self-help and peer counseling for adolescents, community sensitization on human rights, and the increased participation of girls and adolescents in the democratic process (LGL, 2013a, p. 4). It supports multiple parties: the education of teachers, girls of low-income, education of the older girls, and it encourages school competitions and education fairs to motivate learners (J. Garcia, personal communication, April 18, 2016). Two of the girls supported in the training were later appointed to be part of the town’s Board of Directors of the new municipal office, becoming the first girls in Guatemala to be elected to serve in this capacity (LGL, 2013a, p. 4). According to Let Girls Lead (2013a),

Through the implementation of this innovative project, AGALI and IDEI have demonstrated the central value of adolescent girls’ leadership in the advocacy process. Engaging girls at all stages of their advocacy campaign proved to be a highly effective strategy when approaching government officials, traditional leaders, and the media. By leveraging AGALI tools and IDEI’s participatory methodology, the girl leaders were able to highlight and advocate for the largely unacknowledged needs of adolescent girls in both municipalities. (p. 4)

As a result of their awareness raising, almost all of the adolescent girls reported a greater respect for children’s and girls’ rights and responsibilities in their communities. Some also stated that parents, school directors and teachers are better now at prioritizing

children's and particularly girls' needs and well-being. (BLE Solutions, 2013, p.16). This program is indicative of Stromquist's (1995) cognitive and psychological components (knowledge of gender relations to make positive life changes) combined with Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's (2015) critical thinking and knowledge acquisition competencies (regarding gender relations and social norms) as the girls advocated for and ultimately accomplished their goal for inclusivity and acquisition of rights for their full potential.

Through their training the Guatemalan girls were able to challenge inequitable social relations through the development of their leadership and decision-making skills as one of the pathways of education that empowers girls to lead and increases their empowerment (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 254).

An example of the leadership skills taught included the political mapping and advocacy strategy planning tools that AGALI and IDEI incorporated into the process. One of the initial phases of advocacy planning is the analysis of potential allies and opponents, a tactic that helped IDEI garner the public support necessary to achieve success. Strong allies were identified with the Supervisor of Municipal Education and with school principals as well as having consultations with the girls in order to give them all a keep awareness that convinced them to align themselves with the initiative (J. Garcia, personal communication, April 18, 2016). The community consultation is a major key to the advocacy success, enabling the girls to identify the issues facing their communities and develop girl-friendly solutions. IDEI utilized these direct community consultations along with other municipal-level diagnostic tools to establish a critical baseline from which to advocate (LGL, 2013a, p. 5).

Tangible results of this initiative's success can be seen in the roles assumed by the adolescent girls. They took action to push back against the cultural constraints limiting them from realizing their full potential (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 6), developed a critical consciousness/critical thinking (Freire, 2000; Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015) through their training, and advanced not just girls' education and health priorities, but they were the driving force behind the creation of the Office of Childhood and Adolescence. *That* is grassroots organizing at its best. This initiative demonstrates the agency (Bajaj, 2009) shown by the girls and the empowerment process by the virtue of their competencies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015) developed and *acted on* with their goal accomplished. This was done despite the initial obstacles both by the mayor and fellow male classmates who harassed them about venturing outside the traditional role of girls and women in Guatemala. The girls persevered and won, quite handedly.

Through the establishment of the new municipal office, gender equality literally opened the door not only for these adolescent girls, but for all adolescents, girls and boys. An attitude of domination was replaced by an attitude of cooperation (Arbab & Arbad, as cited in Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 40). This will go far and deep in a community and in a nation, that has a very entrenched patriarchal mindset. What these girls did is start a movement and it worked. Their critical reflexivity challenged discourses that traditionally help sustain women's subordination to men, and empowerment ensued (Currie, et al., 2006, p. 420). Their work reverberated across the country and made people listen and most important, it changed institutional structures: the government, the community, and the family. They listened to the movement and responded. This is social justice at its

core, this is the practice of human rights advocacy, this is the empowerment process in action.

One recent LGL program, the Girls' Voices Initiative (GVI), exemplifies the advocacy-oriented, empowerment and leadership-training work LGL emphasizes.

The GVI amplifies the voices and power of girls to influence the post-2015 development agenda, by engaging 135 visionary girl leaders (ages 10 to 19) from Guatemala, Malawi, Ethiopia, and Uganda to support the principles, goals, and targets of the Girl Declaration (Let Girls Lead, n.d.-a). Through direct advocacy, high-level meetings with their governments, and strategic communication campaigns led by the girl leaders, supported by LGL and UNICEF, this initiative ensures that girl's potential, priorities, and needs, will influence the development agenda in their countries. The girls identified education as their number one concern, followed by child marriage and adolescent pregnancy (E. Hagerman, personal communication, March 25, 2016).

Girls attended a workshop and meetings in New York in fall 2015, focusing on leadership development, advocacy, political mapping, grassroots organizing, public speaking, media and social media advocacy, post-2015 processes, and the Girl Declaration as a tool for organizing and advocacy. The reach of this initiative extends to over 2500 girls as each girl leader will, in turn, build the capacity of at least 20 girl leaders in her community to advocate for her rights and the priorities of girls in their communities.

The program made quite an impact. The girls were well received by officials in the Departments of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Gender. According to E. Hagerman (personal communication, March 25, 2016):

In Uganda, the new Minister of Gender announced that her number one priority, after meeting with the girls, was to end child marriage within five years. In Malawi, the girls met directly with the Minister of Gender.

This access to actual decision-makers is indicative of leadership skills the girls are learning through LGL programs. This is advocacy and agency in action.

The program was extremely successful. Girls are staying in school, they are not dropping out; progress was made. The initiative helped them. Girls were able to talk to decision makers. They utilized television, radio and newspaper to get their message across to people in their communities. (E. Hagerman, personal communication, March 25, 2016).

The kind of agency being fostered, the independence, and self-confidence nurtured that is at the core of girl-centered advocacy programmatic work of LGL, is summed up by a LGL Fellow, “the most important thing that I learned was that advocacy must lead to real policy change and that it’s not the same thing working *for* girls as working *with* them [emphasis added]” (LGL, 2013, p. 6).

Adolescent girls in the LGL programs are educated in leadership skills as integral to the empowerment process. This type of training is reflective of CARE’s leadership model where girls are active learners, make a difference locally and globally, and work with others for positive community change (CARE, 2009, 2012). They are developing a power within (Rowlands, 1997; CARE, 2009) which is fundamental to accomplishing social transformation individually and collectively, for the community.

The program’s holistic focus on adolescent girls as unique and important is a strength of the LGL model. The LGL learning philosophy and methodology includes a foundation of social justice, a human rights framework, a gender-focused lens, and experiential learning by its partners to improve girls’ lives (LGL Guide to Girl-Centered Advocacy, n.d.-b, p. 9). Through a focus on local advocacy programs that directly affect

the adolescent girl, it builds on local expertise to support advocacy initiatives conceived of and designed by LGL Fellows and girls. This focus on local ownership and expertise helps to ensure the advocacy goals, and the skills and strategies developed to pursue them are both contextually appropriate and have the greatest possibility for success. (BLE Solutions, 2013, p.10).

Foremost, LGL's advocacy work has a human rights base as stated in the LGL Guide for Girl-Centered Advocacy (n.d.-b):

A gender perspective and a human rights framework are key to successful advocacy efforts for and with girls because both of these lenses provide tools for analyzing the root causes of the problems and inequities that girls face. By framing our advocacy in an international human rights framework, we avoid national politics and provide a normative framework for exposing injustices and barriers to inclusion. (p. 74)

Having human rights integral to its work guarantees that girls' dignity, self-worth, and full potential are kept at the forefront of LGL programs.

### **Conclusion**

Education alone cannot change the larger institutional structures in nations that can often hinder opportunities for girls and women, but it can provide habitudes resulting in social action and change for the greater good. These three non-formal organizations discussed above are excellent examples of how education that has been contextualized for specific populations—understanding the girls' social-economic, environmental, and cultural context—can transform individuals, communities, and nations.

Advocacy for girls' education, leadership, and empowerment is at the heart of these organizations' programmatic work. Through non-formal education they are reaching poor, rural adolescent girls at a time in a girl's life when education, mentoring,

and leadership development are instrumental to their human right to development of their full potential. For the adolescent girls who are not in formal school they are challenging how society views what traditional roles they should play. It is a game changer for the girls and the societies in which they live. This is the empowerment process.

## CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Discussion**

Empowering adolescent girls in developing countries through education is beneficial for them, their families, their communities, and their nation as a whole. An education beyond primary school provides an opportunity to fulfill their right to the full development of the human personality (UNGA, 1948), that would then contribute significantly to them being economically empowered to live more complete lives with independence and dignity. Research has shown that the rate of return on dollars invested in girls' education is greater than any other investment in the developing world (CARE, 2009, p. 7) so the economic benefit alone extends beyond the individual to the nation society (King & Winthrop, 2015; Lloyd & Young, 2009; Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; Winthrop & McGivney, 2014).

Education can be transformative at any age, but for the adolescent girls in the countries highlighted in this study, it is most impactful as they come from patriarchal societies and from rural, impoverished communities. The benefits are both immediate and long-term. Immediate in the sense that it confirms their worth as an individual capable of learning, to being in an environment that fosters gender equality, being given a chance to overcome a life of disadvantage, and to be exposed to potential. In the long term, an education, whether formal or non-formal, provides the possibility for a better life that might include having one's own business, or going on to university or vocational school, to learn leadership skills...to know that *because of* an education there are options that were not there before.

Education alone cannot overcome the gender gap, as gender inequality is a complex issue. As Murphy-Graham (2008) attests, “While education and empowerment are important components of the development process, they are not a panacea” (p. 45). The 2005 Human Development Report (HDR) (United Nations Development Programme, 2005) (UNDP) points out that people are restricted in their actions if they are poor, ill, illiterate, discriminated against, threatened by violence or denied a political voice (p. 18). Education fulfills only one of the three most basic capabilities for human development, which include leading a long and healthy life, being educated, and having resources for a decent standard of living (UNDP, 2005, p. 18). Hence, while education and empowerment help to remove barriers to development and advancement, obstacles remain, including poverty, violence, corruption, disease, and the complacency of those in power (Murphy-Graham, 2008, p. 45).

It is important to keep in mind the contextual background behind these programs. As Murphy-Graham points out, the effect of education on empowerment, development, and leadership will be tempered by economic, social, and cultural constraints. (2008, p. 46; 2012, p. 148). Education in both formal and non-formal programs has empowerment potential to become a transforming force in adolescent girls’ lives and to challenge cultural norms and social structures, but education does not exist in a vacuum (Murphy-Graham, 2008, p. 46).

How do you empower the girl as a whole? There are fundamental dynamics and economics that render girls vulnerable according to Lucy Lake, Camfed CEO, who stated at the 2015 Skoll World Forum, “If we want to transform girls prospects then we must transform their context” (Van Oranje, 2015). She explains the importance of bringing

together those in authority to explore/engage with the obstacles to girls' education: the health system, police, traditional leadership, and those in education positions to discuss solutions to get and keep girls in school. She also spoke of the role of money, the costs for families for secondary education who can't afford it although they bring crucial resources to the table in general: shelter, love and support.

Parents are disempowered/marginalized from the school system...it is important to get the right governance over the resources for girls' education and for accountability...in order to achieve the real returns on girls' education and be able to scale up action for girls' education. (Van Oranje, 2015)

Yet, as the five programs in this study illustrate, there is progress being made.

At Daraja Academy in Kenya, young girls are taught to actualize leadership, empowerment and community service, all contributing to transformative agency (Bajaj, 2009), allowing them to “respond to schooling in ways that express individual and collective action toward positive social change” (p. 552).

With Camfed's *My Better World* (2013) curriculum and its Learner Guide Program, adolescent girls are able to develop their individual competencies, agency, and empowerment to become role models and mentors to the next generation of students. What all these programs have in common is a focus on “unlocking the potential of girls' education and young women's leadership – in individuals, in communities, and in economies” (Lake, 2015, p. 3). This is the empowerment process at work.

Akili Dada young women learn the value of leadership and become changemakers in the process. With a holistic program providing financial and leadership support, mentorship, skills training, and a stage to both share their stories and continue their growth, these Dadas are transforming themselves into intelligent women for the future growth of Africa. It is key to remember that supporting leadership capabilities needs to be

seen as an ongoing process beginning with a young woman's early life as they enter leadership roles and continue to grow once in them (O'Neil et al., 2015, p. 22).

BRAC has a very successful program for combining life skills and vocational skills training to adolescent girls in its quest to provide non-formal education to girls so they can break out of their historically traditional roles and move into the modern.

Through this economic empowerment, adolescent girls are developing their capabilities (Sen, 1999) and competencies (Murphy-Graham Lloyd, 2015), increasing their wellbeing, and gaining intrinsic empowerment (Rowlands, 1997; Ross et al., 2011).

The Let Girls Lead focus on a human rights framework and social justice through a gender-focused lens is its hallmark to achieving girl-focused advocacy efforts to achieve policy changes at the local and national level. These efforts result in empowerment and leadership in adolescent girls through training on how to work with government agencies and with the media, as well as learning how to be their own agent for change. These programs have a strong ideology linked to development of a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) in order to challenge patriarchal standards that hinder female growth and development. LGL exemplifies transformative agency (Bajaj, 2009) as its programs help girls to improve their community and nation in ways toward positive social change.

If girls are not adequately educated during childhood and adolescence they will not be able to take advantage of opportunities that could lift them out of the poverty and marginalized background from which they come. Formal and non-formal education programs are such opportunities and provide hope, dignity, and tangible resources for the

populations they serve. They present solutions to confront gender inequality, promote the empowerment process, and provide leadership skill set to these young women.

This allows for the educational opportunities to have a multiplicative effect that goes beyond an education for them. Equipped with the knowledge that they can succeed if given the tools – an education – they can become leaders of change and work toward alleviating poverty and inequality. This is the empowerment process.

There are layers of inequality that constrain life choices: being a young girl, poor, and from a rural area in a developing country. But, there are opportunities in certain settings and this report has touched on five. Educational progress can be made during this transitional period between childhood and adulthood, and research shows the importance of education, for the benefit of the individuals but also for communities and nations. The literature review highlights themes of empowerment, gender equality and leadership, and their relationship to education. Although operating in different contexts, the similarities between all five programs become clear in their efforts and success in promoting adolescent girls' empowerment through their diverse strategies. Their contributions to girls' agency, intrinsic empowerment, the development of their core competencies, and the nurturing of their forms of power (e.g. power within and power with) have all fostered the girls' capabilities to achieve positive development outcomes.

Decisions made during adolescence affect the wellbeing of young people as well as their communities and nations. An investment in education during this life phase can help break the cycle of poverty prevalent in developing countries. It supports girls to make informed decisions about their life ahead: decisions regarding marriage,

childbearing, a career or vocation, all of which impact their communities, families, and nation societies.

### **Conclusions**

What these five programs have in common is a focus on unlocking the potential of girls' education and young women's leadership – in individuals, in communities, and in economies (Lake, 2015, p. 3). This focus is what drives their unifying purpose to empower, to educate, and to provide adolescent girls with the tools to help them rise above their mostly marginalized background to achieve dignity and independence *through* an education.

Marginalization in education is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social, political, and economic processes that restrict certain groups of people (UNESCO, 2010, p. 272). These processes or inequalities are key to understanding what role interventions can play in these situations to be successful. The specific causes of inequalities in this study stem from poverty and patriarchy. What the interventions (programs) aim to achieve is to tackle the problems in specific communities (local or national) by providing access to education coupled with tools for empowerment, leadership, agency, and independence. This will contribute to adolescent girls achieving their right to education, equality, and dignity, to which all human beings are entitled (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). The girls' wellbeing and the development of their full potential are integral in these highlighted programs.

The role of education in promoting adolescent girls' empowerment is a growing research field and it has arisen at the same time as the global education reform movement has responded to improving learning outcomes, to bring in more relevant curricula and to

utilize more effective pedagogies (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 15). There are several frameworks and theories that are being developed and researched as multiple stakeholders, including aid agencies, NGOs, and foundations are prioritizing adolescent girls' empowerment. There a need for education beyond traditional primary schooling for these girls as it is their right *to* that education. Additionally, as donors, NGOs and nation states realize the importance of education to those they serve, this global community needs to focus on what girls aspire to and deserve in their lives.

According to Rindfuss (as cited in Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 36) “adolescence is ‘dense’ with educational, sexual, work and family transitions, each transition affecting pathways for the others.” Adolescent girls’ lives can easily be disrupted by early marriage and early childbirth. It is also during this time that gender roles become differentiated and intensified, in preparation for adulthood, especially in developing countries where culture and tradition play significant roles (Lloyd & Young, 2009). To address the benefits of education in both the short term and long term for girls leading to opportunities for self-actualization and empowerment, Lloyd and Young (2009) state that:

During this phase of life, an education that heightens a girl’s social status, minimizes her social risks, delays her assumptions of adult roles, and cultivates a capacity for critical thinking and independent decision-making can reshape her future pathways radically and profoundly – with cascading benefits over her lifetime. (p. 36)

Akili Dada, BRAC, Camfed, Daraja Academy, and Let Girls Lead exemplify these ideals by their roles in the working with this age group and the successes they have had.

Adolescent girls’ progression from school to economic independence is key to the return on investment in their education, and their emerging leadership in turn brings recognition to the value of girls’ education (Lake, 2015, p. 22). This points to the

relationship between student agency and the empowerment process. As Bajaj (2009) points out:

Attention to student agency and the ways that innovative educational initiatives enable such resistance can greatly inform scholars and practitioners of international and comparative education who seek to understand the increasingly complex interplay between school and society. (p. 255)

Bajaj's research touches on the role that non-government schools can play in developing student agency as an alternative experience that has a higher potential to encourage agency and the empowerment process vs. the more conventional government school environment. This was seen in Daraja Academy.

Adolescent girls' empowerment in relation to education is part of larger discussions around two agendas. The first agenda involves gender equality, livelihoods, and education through the development lens. Development is integral to a nation's sustainability and thus there is the need to seriously examine agendas and decisions on how to provide education to its young people. It behooves a nation to see that in the long run, a healthy and vibrant economy is reflective of its own policies and implementation of sound development principles. This speaks to the role of: education, the community, the family, and lastly the role of government—from the local to the national that has to do with policies relating to giving its populace the access to education and the opportunity to complete education through secondary level. These different constituents are interrelated. By educating its citizens (boys *and* girls) it elevates the local and national economy by having working individuals contributing to the nation's economy and development as a whole. This significant contribution to its citizens being economically empowered to live full and complete lives with independence and dignity. The second agenda centers on the social and political arenas of a nation. Developing

countries have a history of patriarchy and until nations change policies that grant access and opportunities for girls to continue in school up through secondary level, inequities in education for girls will continue. This agenda item is covered more in the recommendation section below.

What was evident from the studies in Unterhalter et al. (2014, p. 52) is that “education cannot independently create empowerment; there needs to be continuous policy commitment...knowledge on its own does not necessarily lead to changes in socio-economic norms.” This punctuates the importance of policies and how instrumental they are to setting the framework for a healthy and equitable mapping for adolescent girls’ right to education and the possibilities that follow. Additionally, according to Seeberg (2011),

Girls are central to supporting the transfer of wealth from one generation to the next and breaking poverty cycles. Large structural and policy changes are the stage upon which adolescent girls act out their agency. Policies can provide the scaffolding for the girls to enhance their capabilities and pursue the aspirations they value. (p. 58)

Education is a human right. Given the history of patriarchy and treatment of women/girls in certain developing countries and cultures, getting a society to understand that right can be challenging. This is why there are multiple players trying to advance girls’ education but “in order to be accepted, human rights have to be tailored to the local context and resonate with the local cultural framework (Merry, 2006, p. 221). As related to the local context, Merry emphasizes, “Human rights are more transformative if they challenge existing assumptions about power relationships” (2006, p.222). This is at the heart of the obstacle in the communities in this study. Those in power (e.g. government, religious, and community leaders, family) can be resistant to the idea of girls being

educated, of being empowered, of being able to lead, and see it is a threat to the fabric of society. This runs deep into societal institutional structures but programs like those in the study are chipping away at those challenges and making progress.

Given the societal and economic contexts from which some girls come, one must be realistic about providing alternative sources of education that truly benefit and are tangible for the girls. An example of this non-formal program is BRAC. This is where BRAC succeeds in their educational models and ELA is one example. The program offers participating adolescents the opportunities to take on desired credit in order to benefit from their livelihood and self-employment training and abilities (Bandiera et al., 2012).

Bandiera et al. (2012) findings suggest interventions that simultaneously try to reduce informational constraints related to risky behaviors and reduce constraints on the provision of skills related to income generation, can have beneficial, quantitatively large and sustained impacts on adolescent girls along both dimensions. As such, the program offers some promise to policy makers, as being a low cost and scalable intervention that enables adolescent girls to improve their life outcomes. Bandiera et al. (2012) sees this as especially relevant in many parts of the developing world that are facing the ‘youth bulge’ and the need to skill and provide meaningful opportunities to their young populations. The gains of a dual approach ELA-style program are especially worthwhile among adolescent girls who face similarly constrained labor market opportunities as men, but are also impacted by norms of early marriage, childbirth and engagement in risky behaviors (Bandiera et al., 2012).

Moving forward with education programs for adolescent girls' empowerment will require more localized solutions that address specific contexts. There are successful interventions addressing these challenges at the local and country level from which we can learn. The communities and the countries need to work with the NGOs and their local and nation governments to take these solutions to scale.

Secondary education is a game-changer for adolescent girls. This is a critical age where in many developing countries young girls are likely to get married and start having children. Whether education is in a formal traditional school setting or through a non-formal education setting, it has the potential for empowering young girls and giving them opportunities to advance beyond traditional roles. Post-primary education can provide confidence, self-esteem, knowledge, and a sense of purpose and dignity to adolescent girls. Some will become leaders – at the local, regional, or national level – and by having more women “at the table,” change is more likely to come. Many developing countries have patriarchal societies and only by having girls begin to challenge these ideologies and use their voice to bring positive change for themselves, their communities, and the larger society, can there be hope for more empowered women, more gender equity, and lives that are more fulfilled because it is their human right.

### **Recommendations**

For a field in its early stages, there needs to be more research to test, evaluate and/or develop a best practices or best competencies framework that traditional schools, private schools, governments, and NGOs could look toward for standards on the relationship between education and empowerment. There exist frameworks and supporting research but few programs have been properly and thoroughly evaluated

according to the full range of competencies essential for girls' empowerment (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 16). This is important in assessing program outcomes to determine their value and impact on adolescent girls' learning and development (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 84) and, key to this paper, their empowerment.

Questions to ask per Lloyd and Young (2009) might include:

- Is their learning environment enhanced while participating in the different programs?
- How is the quality of the education measured or determined?
- Is it relevant (e.g. are there marketable skills?)
- Are critical thinking skills being taught/developed?
- Are gender roles being explored)? (p. 84).

I argue that research should involve longitudinal studies involving longer time frame studies similar to what Murphy-Graham (2012) did with the SAT program in Honduras to give more credence to the field and proof of what actually works. Future studies need to focus on the relationship between quality education and an empowering education since one bleeds into the other. This is key as it underscores an assumption that access to an education will suffice; but access to a *quality* education should be integrated into the empowerment piece.

Research that addresses context is needed: features of inequality are context-specific and hence interventions need to be developed that will work for the specific population; there is not a one size fits all intervention. In the literature review by Unterhalter et al. (2014) areas of social division that should be considered when developing interventions that will improve girls' schooling and enhance gender equality are:

- Socio-economic status/class (understood both in terms of access to economic, political and social/cultural capital)
- Race

- Ethnicity
- Location (i.e. social and material access to infrastructure and resources)
- Levels of discrimination and exclusion associated with disabilities
- Levels of confidence in reporting of aspects of violence. (p. 57)

Particular attention needs to be given to researching norms and inclusion, and the “areas of intersecting inequalities associated with particular contexts come high on a list for future research” (Unterhalter et al., 2014, p.58).

In the interim, while developing countries wait for a national agenda that puts quality education where it belongs – at the top – and implements the policies that will provide quality education for all children and adolescents, the decision to educate a girl child, an adolescent girl, ultimately rests within the family. According to Graca Machel, “at the end of the day, it is the mother and father who decide to keep girls in schools, at least secondary school” (Van Oranje, 2015). This is key to remember as we see the importance of the family role in promoting education.

Given the significance of the family, this leads to the fact that men and boys are critical partners in changing gender norms. Progressive change cannot happen through the actions of women and girls alone. More evidence on the role of men and boys in supporting women and girl’s leadership is needed (O’Neil et al., 2015, p. 22) as well as research to see how incorporating males in programming can improve the outlook for girls’ education and empowerment (Unterhalter et. al, 2014, p. 56).

The traditional roles among men and women in developing countries can be an obstacle to girls’ education due to dominant patriarchal societies and the social responses to it can inform some of the attitudes persisting with regard to girls’ education. To counter hegemonic practices that minimize the role of girls and women, as well as the

value of a girls' education, additional research and evaluation into programs that focus on girls' opportunities is encouraged to validate such programs and "that will contribute to reducing the obstacle of machismo/patriarchy and open up the possibilities for change in gender relations" (Rowlands, 1997, p. 132).

It is imperative to work with men and boys regarding girls' empowerment. As a participant in Murphy-Graham's (2012, p. 151) SAT program simply yet poignantly shares, "Women already know what they need to do, but men haven't taken into account what their responsibilities are...women know, now it is men that have to know." This statement, by extension, includes girls, and amplifies the need to incorporate men and boys in the process. For without their cooperation it *will* be an uphill battle. It can't be reiterated enough the importance of involving men as allies and that begins with involving boys so they grow up feeling that boys and girls are equally deserving of the right to education. In the cases where men and boys are the barrier to adolescent girls' empowerment, organizations may run into conflict with them and it is important to remain flexible when attempting to change the social relationships (Rowlands, 1997, p. 141).

Having said that, a continued emphasis on girls' education can aggravate gendered tensions in communities and is an incomplete strategy to promote gender equality according to Glick and Manion (as cited in Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 2). Programs and policies targeting girls due to their marginalized status is instrumental but these efforts should look to changing gendered relations and norms, so that the root causes of girls' disadvantage can be addressed (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015; UNESCO, 2010, p. 272). An emphasis on gender, rather than girls, will permit a broader

discussion around how gender inequality limits the potential of both girls and boys to fully develop their capabilities (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 3).

With regard to educational curriculum and pedagogy, one cannot discount these areas as pathways to promote gender equality and empowerment through education. More evidence is needed to build on these areas as integral to the overall topic of adolescent girls' empowerment and further study would bring attention to gendered beliefs and norms in pedagogy and curriculum (DeJeaghère & Lee, 2009, p. 39). Textbooks and learning materials are needed to reflect gender equality (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 254). The "hidden curriculum" refers to the invisible or unspoken messages communicated to students via textbooks, teachers, and school culture (e.g. rules and procedures) which can be opposite to what is taught in the actual curriculum; both are equally influential in shaping students' attitudes and beliefs (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 255).

More female role models and mentors are needed to help boys and girls as well as men and other women to see that women can be strong and intelligent, and do more beyond the normative gender stereotype (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 259). All five programs in this study highlight the value of women role models and their programming builds opportunities for women to work with young girls to show that they too can develop leadership capabilities if *given* the chance to do so (e.g. Camfed's young women's alumni association). Leading by example is integral in these studies and more of the same is needed to increase their reach and effectiveness.

Teachers in the formal and non-formal programs need to demonstrate and teach gender equity (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015, p. 257). This is important in order for

children and adolescents to move beyond gender stereotypes to see that girls can excel at any subject just as much as boys can. Girls should not be taught that there are certain educational tracks or areas that they should select. They should have the opportunity to succeed in an educational setting and should receive equal treatment.

There is a need for more data on the growing non-formal education sector. There exists an international data collection on formal educational structures (e.g. UNESCO) but there is not a comparable source for non-formal programs (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 29). While there has been a rapid rise in NGO-funded non-formal schools, the data is “thin” on learning outcomes for the participants in the non-formal programs and equally so on the social and economic returns for girls enrolled in them. The numbers suggest that enrollment in these programs is increasing and therefore serving a community of learners yet the hard-core evidence (quantitative data, and additional qualitative data) needs to be substantiated. Many adolescent girls move between the two education models due to the pressures they experience and often non-formal education provides a route back to formal education (Lloyd & Young, 2009, p. 2), therefore more research is encouraged.

Other recommendations focus on policies. This starts at the top, with governments and ministries of education believing in the value of a girls’ education, up through secondary schooling, and then implementing those national policies. True success requires buy-in from the government and local communities for programs to have any hope of sustainability (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2015, p. 16).

The importance of engaging with the government school systems is where real change can occur followed by reaching out to the communities, “getting data into their

hands” per Lucy Lake, CEO of Camfed (Van Oranje, 2015). Progress can be made by involving the local communities into the education model where there is joint responsibility and accountability for children’s education. This has worked beautifully with the Camfed model through its power-sharing approach that engages committees in the solution as discussed in Chapter three.

There needs a mindset change by all the players (government, communities, families) in order for this girls’ education movement to succeed. Graca Machal says succinctly, “Build an alliance to drive social change.” (Van Oranje, 2015). This emphasizes the need to join with others that share the same mindset about the importance and value of girls’ education (e.g. UNICEF pairing with Camfed and Let Girls Lead). This allows for maximum reach and effective and efficient use of resources.

Graca Machel further articulates by adding the importance of addressing the hard questions of what fuels child marriage and the need to understand the community you are working with. “Traditions can change and traditions must change. Culture always elevates us; traditions can be oppressive. It’s a long walk we have together. It takes generations (e.g. changing child marriage). It’s not a quick fix” (Van Oranje, 2015).

“Education is an unqualified good for human capability expansion and human freedom” (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 8). This statement sums up this study and my hope is that through future research, future forums and conversations that involve all the players integral to the future of girls’ education, improvements continue that provide access to and completion of an education (albeit secondary or non-formal methods) in order to fulfill the right to education for adolescent girls. Gloria Steinem writes that it is

essential to create a new normal and to remember, "...that the human race has two wings. If one is broken, no one can soar" (as cited in Chesler & McGovern, 2016, p. xxxiii).

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APPENDIX A

A WORKSHOP FOR U.S. EDUCATORS

HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT  
LOOKING AT EDUCATIONAL ACCESS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES  
CONNECTING THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL

Workshop for U.S. Educators  
Human Rights, Gender Equity and Empowerment, Looking at Educational Access in  
Developing Countries: Connecting the Global to the Local



Human Rights (Credit: HRE Pedagogy & Praxis, Fall 2013, Susan Katz)



Gender Equity/Girls' Empowerment (Source: [Let Girls Lead](#))



Empowerment & Human Rights (Source: [Photo by Morton Broffman/Getty Images](#))

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## Introduction

This curriculum on human rights, gender equity, empowerment, and educational access was developed to educate a high school audience of boys and girls on the importance of these topics in the developing world and yet, bring it “back to the local” for them to link the relationship between these topics globally to the local context. It is important for students to learn what their own role might be in both the global society as well as how they are affected here at home and what their role is.

Issues on educational access are pronounced in developing countries yet there are themes (human rights, gender equity, empowerment, leadership) that can resonate with students in the U.S. when taught through a human rights lens. The marginalization of adolescent girls in the developing world negatively affects every aspect of their lives and hence the families, communities and the global society of which they are part. There are issues in the U.S. that are linked to those abroad (themes listed above), that can be taught to a high school audience in a manner illustrating the similarities and differences. Human rights underlie the entire curriculum and is integral to its effectiveness and strength.

Objectives of lesson plans:

- To teach an introductory unit on human rights, gender equity and empowerment
- To introduce students to issues surrounding girls’ education in developing countries and the impact educating girls can have (political, economic, cultural issues)
- To have students begin to think about their role and responsibilities as global citizens as well as local citizens
- To have them begin to experience these topics through listening to “other” stories of youth both in the U.S. and globally
- To have students reflect on their own ideas and experiences of these introductory units

The lesson plans illustrate—through film, discussions, writing exercises, poetry, art, and presentations—the topics of poverty, education, empowerment, gender equity, oppression, and human rights. Through reflection and other methods, the themes taught will encourage students to think how these issues are tied into education, from the narrow in-class context to the broader life-long, out in the world context. It is important for students to begin to value the significance of human rights, their role as global citizens, and their responsibility to their own communities, viewed through a human rights lens. The following subjects areas are covered: political, cultural, historical, and geographical.

Through this curriculum core curriculum standards are being achieved (language arts, math, social studies).

Students are encouraged to keep a folder to store all materials from this curriculum.

# Human Rights

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination....Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.”

Eleanor Roosevelt



## Human Rights

Time: 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights booklet and handout
- Human Rights Squares
- Video: What are Human Rights
- Computer equipment to show video

Objective: Introduce the term “human rights” and give introductory lesson on what they are, how they originated and to explore students current knowledge of human rights through discussion and activity. Introduce UDHR and Human Rights Education.

**Activity:** Human Rights Squares (see sheet) 10 minutes

### What are Human Rights?

Human rights are the rights a person has simply because he or she is a human being.

Human rights are universal: they are the birthright of every person.

Human rights are inalienable: you cannot lose them.

Human rights are indivisible: you cannot be denied them because someone decides that it is less important or non-essential.

Human rights are interdependent: all human rights are part of a complementary framework.

### Human Rights as Inspiration and Empowerment

Human rights principles are a vision of a free, peaceful, and just world; where there are minimum standards for how individuals and institutions everywhere should treat people. Human rights also empower people with a framework for action when those minimum standards are not met, for people still have human rights even if the laws or those in power do not recognize or protect them.

We experience human rights every day in the United States. Examples include: when we worship according to our belief, when we travel to other parts of the country or when we have the opportunity to go to school beyond elementary school, like high school and/or college. Although we usually take these actions for granted, people both here in the U.S. and in other countries do not enjoy all these liberties equally. Some of the information in this curriculum on human rights, gender equity, and empowerment will help broaden your insights into these topics.

### A Short History of Human Rights (9:30)

Show the film, *What are Human Rights*

<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights.html>

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), December 10, 1948

Following the Holocaust and World War II, many nations wanted to create a document that would capture the aspirations and protections to which all people everywhere are entitled. The UDHR, composed of 30 articles, form a comprehensive document covering economic, social, cultural, political, and civic rights.

As a declaration, it is not enforceable, but rather is a statement of intent, a set of principles to which United Nations member states commit themselves in an effort to provide all people a life of human dignity.

Link to the UDHR: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

Handouts: UDHR booklet to each student or single page handout listing the rights

**\*\*This short introduction to Human Rights Education will teach students to identify ways to connect human rights to experiences from their own lives; human rights issues can be brought home. Human rights are not only a global issue. We need to talk about human rights in the classroom and connect the global to the local.**

### **Quotes from film:**

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

*Eleanor Roosevelt, “In Our Hands” (1958 speech delivered on the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*

<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/humanrights/quotes.shtml>

Source: United Nations Resources for Speakers on Global Issues, Human Rights for All Quotations

“Remember that human rights are choices we make everyday as human beings. They are the responsibility we all share, to respect each other, to help each other, and to protect those in need”.

Source: *What are Human Rights* film

### **Discussion:** 15 minutes

- Given this introduction to human rights, what are your thoughts now? What did you learn that you didn't know before or were surprised about (use quotes to help)?
- Give an example of a celebration of a human right or a violation of a human right (either that you experienced personally or witnessed).

Human Rights information sourced from: Nancy Flowers (Ed.) 1999, *Human Rights Here and Now: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

## HUMAN RIGHTS SQUARES

Ask another person to answer the question in each square. Ask someone different for each square and record their answer and name in the square.

Name a human right	Name a country where human rights are violated	Name a group in your country that wants to deny rights to others	Name a country where people are denied rights because of their race or ethnicity	Name a document that proclaims human rights
Name an organization which fights for human rights	Name a film/video that is about human rights	Name a song about human rights	Name an event that celebrates human rights	Name a human right being achieved around the world
Type of human rights violation that most disturbs you	Name a book about human rights	Name a right sometimes denied to women	Name a defender of human rights that is no longer alive	Name a country where people are denied rights because of their religion
How many rights are in the Universal Declaration of HR	Name a right all children should have	Name a human right violation that you have witnessed or heard about	Name a right of yours that is respected	Name someone who is a defender of human rights

Adapted from: Flowers, N. (Ed.), 1999. Human Rights Here and Now: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A Publication of the Human Rights Educators' Network of Amnesty International USA, the Human Rights Resource Center, and the Stanley Foundation. p. 48

# Gender Equity

“It is essential to create a new normal and to remember...that the human race has two wings. If one is broken, no one can soar.”

Gloria Steinem



## Gender Equity I

There are two films suggested. *Girl Rising* includes girl-related stories from nine countries. *PODER* is about girls in Guatemala. Film summaries and the curriculum follow.

### I. *Girl Rising*

Using the film, *Girl Rising*, will help educate students about the issues surrounding girls' education in the developing world, and about the impact that educating girls can have. It gives students an opportunity to grapple with the very difficult questions posed by the barriers that stand between girls and their schooling.

*Girl Rising* journeys around the globe to witness the strength of the human spirit and the power of education to change the world. Viewers get to know nine unforgettable girls living in the developing world: ordinary girls who confront tremendous challenges and overcome nearly impossible odds to pursue their dreams. Prize-winning authors put the girls' remarkable stories into words, and renowned actors give voice to the girls' stories and this powerful truth: educating girls can transform families, communities, countries and eventually, the world.

Teachers can engage their students in meaningful, theme-based social studies, political science, math, economics, and language arts lessons by encouraging them to think about important political, cultural, historical, social, religious, and geographic issues tied to educating girls – and about their responsibilities as global citizens, as well as local citizens.

Through developing a better understanding of how family dynamics, poverty, and community expectations intersect to keep girls either in or out of school, students' views of the world will evolve.

The curriculum uses essential questions designed to stimulate critical thinking in students. The curriculum is aligned to the U.S. Common Core State Standards, includes an assessment tool (\*\*) to measure student learning, and offers resources to further learning, spark discussion, and prompt students to take action.

\*\* This appendix is just a snapshot of part of the curriculum and does not include the assessment tool. That can be accessed on the *Girl Rising* curriculum website.

The curriculum includes:

- Film Chapters (film clips)
- Teacher Guides: provides summaries of, and outline the resources for all film chapters, includes Film Viewing Guide for students with questions to ask before film, during film, and after for reflection.
- Country Fact Sheets (broad profile of each country)
- Issue Fact Sheets: provide more information on the core issues surrounding girls' education and reinforce the material from the film

- Project-Based Lessons: general topics related to the film to stimulate discussion and to link the concept of “local to global”, such as “What is Freedom” and “What’s Working: the Impact of NGOs”.
- Common Core State Standards to provide teachers the tools needed to teach this curriculum. Each lesson plan is 50 minutes.

Two free film chapters clips are in this unit as well as their lesson plan curriculum. All resources are from <http://girlrising.com/full-curriculum/#video-assets>

Ruksana from India

Suma from Nepal

### **1. Ruksana, India**

Film Summary:

Ruksana and her family are “pavement dwellers” living on the streets of Kolkata, India. Her parents have sacrificed everything, moving from their village to the big city, so their daughters could go to school. Ruksana’s life is filled with danger, but she escapes into her artwork and draws strength from her parents’ resolve. “That’s when I learned to never give up.” (Ruksana)

Ruksana’s chapter focuses on the issues surrounding poverty and the impact of positive family support.

Objective: Students will begin to learn about the challenges faced by girls living in developing countries, and they’ll discover how some are overcoming the barriers and obtaining an education. This film clip demonstrates how important family support and influence are, both in the film and to relate it to their own lives.

Time: 50 minutes (for each of the nine film clips and lesson plan that accompanies them)

Materials Needed:

- Ruksana’s film chapter (link below); about 15:00 minute clip
- Copy of the Film Viewing Guide for each student (in Teacher Guide link)
- Map/globe

Map of the world: United Nations #4170. April 2012

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/world.pdf>

- Teacher Guide: Ruksana from India

[http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/hs-tg-india/1-HS\\_Teacher\\_Guide-India\\_Final%20FormattedSA.pdf](http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/hs-tg-india/1-HS_Teacher_Guide-India_Final%20FormattedSA.pdf)

- Country Fact Sheet, India
- Issue Fact Sheet, Family Support and Influence

Film Viewing Guide (p. 3 in Teacher Guide): includes “Before You Watch”, “While You Watch”, and “Reflection After the Film” Questions

Teacher Guide - Introduce lesson:

- Show India on map/globe

- Have students briefly write how others have helped support 1-2 of their goals. Example: who listens to you when you have a problem?
- Have them write 1-2 ways they have supported someone else's goals.
- Give students Film Viewing Guide before film so they can write comments prior, during, and after film.

View film: [Ruksana from India](#)

Discussion after film:

- Use Film Viewing Guide, "after film questions".

- Issue Fact Sheet: Family Support and Influence

Overview:

Family encouragement and committed support can do amazing things! A family's long-term commitment to education makes all the difference in keeping girls in school. Parental sacrifices, guidance, and wisdom can improve their children's chances of marrying later, having healthier children of their own, earning more income as adults, and climbing out of poverty.

Related impacts: poverty, education

Although fewer than half of the girls in the developing world will ever reach secondary school, a girl with an extra year of education can earn 20 percent more as an adult, impacting not only her family, but also her nation's economy.

In more than 50 countries around the world, school is not free. Families need to pay for uniforms, books, and sometimes even exams and report cards.

What's working:

Not only is it important to educate girls, it is important to educate family members and communities on the positive benefits they will experience when girls receive an education. NGOs around the world are implementing programs to help girls. They also advocate for the benefits that educated girls provide to the larger community such as specifically funding the education of girls and educating community leaders on the benefits that educated girls bring to the community.

## **2. Suma, Nepal**

Film summary:

Though her brothers go to school, Suma is forced into bonded labor at age 6. The Nepali girl endures years of sorrow by writing beautiful music and experiences freedom when she learns to read. Now, she uses her education in a fight to free other girls.

Objective: Students will begin to learn about the challenges faced by girls living in developing countries, and they'll discover how some are overcoming the barriers and obtaining an education.

Time: 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Suma's film chapter
- Copy of the Film Viewing Guide (in Teacher Guide) for each student
- Map/globe

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/world.pdf>

- Teacher Guide: Suma from Nepal

[http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/hs-tg-nepal/1-HS\\_Teacher\\_Guide-Nepal\\_Final%20FormattedSA.pdf](http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/hs-tg-nepal/1-HS_Teacher_Guide-Nepal_Final%20FormattedSA.pdf)

- Country Fact Sheet, Nepal
- Issue Fact Sheets: Cultural Influences, Family Support and Influence, Oppression

Suma from Nepal & Senna from Peru (view Nepal clip)

- Issue Fact Sheets: Cultural Influences, Family Support and Influence, and Oppression

#### 1. Overview of Cultural Influence and Family Support and Influence:

The environment in which a girl grows up will influence every area of her life.

Cultural beliefs surrounding the value and role of women, as well as the value placed on education, have a huge impact on a girls' life. Behavior that is seen as intolerable in one community will seem perfectly normal in another. Challenging these deeply held cultural beliefs is often one of the biggest obstacles facing girls.

Related impacts: poverty, education

Living in poverty can be extremely stressful, and a girl born today has a 1 in 4 chance of being born into extreme poverty. However, the positive impact of a supportive family on girls living in poverty is immeasurable. Families working together to ensure that every child, girl or boy, receives an education is proven to be the most effective way to end the cycle of poverty.

Keeping girls safe, in school, and focused on the future can take tremendous commitment. In more than 50 countries around the world, school is not free.

What's working:

NGOs around the world are implementing programs to help girls. They also advocate for the benefits that educated girls provide to the larger community such as specifically funding the education of girls and educating community leaders on the benefits that educated girls bring to the community.

#### 2. Overview of Oppression:

Oppression is far more than simply taking away opportunity; it involves taking away an individual's legal rights and protections, their choice, and their voice. Oppression is about gaining complete control over someone else's life, often by extreme measures.

Related impacts: poverty, education

Developing countries generally lack the financial resources to offer aid to their citizens. People's options for daily survival are often very limited. Poverty has a powerful impact on the lives of those living in it and when they feel they have a way out of the extreme hardships, they often take it.

One of the most effective ways to oppress a girl is to deny her an education. Education ends the cycles of poverty, child marriage, poor health, and ignorance – all factors that pose obstacles not only to a girl’s success, but also to the success of her country. Educated girls help build communities and they are inclined to be civically engaged. Educated girls marry later and have fewer (and healthier) children, leading to healthier communities.

What’s working: NGOs (as above)

### 3. Project-based lesson: What is Freedom?

Objective: Encourage students to examine their beliefs about civil rights. Students will investigate how a girl’s legal status or the culture or economics of her community impacts her opportunities.

Time: Two 50 minute sessions

Materials Needed:

- Project-based lesson sheet: What is Freedom?
- Issue Fact Sheet: Oppression
- Venn Diagram

[http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/venndiagram/1-GR\\_Curriculum\\_Resources\\_VENN\\_DIAGRAM.pdf](http://assets.girlrising.com/asset/girl-rising-curriculum/venndiagram/1-GR_Curriculum_Resources_VENN_DIAGRAM.pdf)

a. Homework assignment: After viewing the film chapter students will write narrative essays reflecting on their perception of what freedom means. Students will explore the freedoms they have, compared to those of girls and boys living in other countries living in poverty or in oppressive situations where fundamental rights are sometimes denied.

How difficult is it to care for oneself or one’s family, or to contribute to a community, when one cannot read or write? “What else?” is a great general question to ask students to encourage them to think deeply about an issue.

To relate to their own lives: Do poverty and oppression exist in the U.S.? If so, how and where? What freedoms are being denied? What can be done by you as an individual? How can you get involved or take action?

b. In-class discussion (suggested talking points)

Using “What is Freedom?” sheet: Building a Foundation and Making Connections section:

- Split the class into groups of two or three students and have each group fill in a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting one girl’s story with their own lives. Have groups share with the class the commonalities and differences that they found.

Questions for exercise:

- How do these girls’ situations compare with their own?

Discussion:

1. For Developing countries context

- What roles could boys play in advocating for girls' right to education in developing countries?

- What happens when a country does not value all citizens equally?

What are the ramifications?

- What happens when a country's constitution or its laws conflict with tradition?

- Is it okay to give different demographic groups different rights and freedoms?

2. For U.S. context:

- How do my civil rights impact the opportunities that I have?

- How do the opportunities that I have impact my rights?

- How does a girl's legal status impact her opportunities?

- How can individuals and organizations effect change?

To register for free curriculum and access to 3 free film clips (stories), go to:

<http://girlrising.com/>

All materials in this unit adapted from and sourced from

<http://girlrising.com/full-curriculum/#high-school>

## Gender Equity II

### *PODER*

#### Film Summary:

PODER (Spanish for “power”) is a powerful short film based on the true story of two courageous girl leaders, Emelin and Elba, two indigenous Mayan girls from Guatemala, who fought for their rights and transformed their community. These inspiring leaders advocated for legislation and funding to ensure that girls can go to school, stay healthy, and learn important skills to escape poverty.

PODER is an innovative, participatory style film about girl-led change that features Elba and Emelin playing themselves.

The film starts out in the future then transitions to a first-person narrative to tell the story.

These young girls fought against widespread discrimination and for their rights, resulting in a transformation in their own lives, their families, and their community. This story of girl-centered media advocacy serves as a global advocacy and awareness-raising tool about girls’ power to lead social change. The girls advocated for their rights and became community leaders.

The girls were educated in leadership skills and became aware of their role in influencing decisions, their right to do so, and their ability to work toward change.

This creative documentary is about girl-centered advocacy in Guatemala. How can we shift the focus and talk about advocacy efforts here in the U.S. for gender equity?

#### Questions to keep in mind while watching the film (reflection):

Can you be change agents?

Is there discrimination here?

Are traditions holding back girls from moving ahead and living to their full potential?

Time: 50 minutes

Materials needed:

- the film, *PODER* (16:00) <http://www.letgirlslead.org/poder>

- *PODER* Background Information and Discussion Guide for screenings

[PODER Screening Information](#)

- Handout: Meet the 15-Year Old from Rural Guatemala Who Addressed the U. N. (this is about Emelin, one of the 2 girls who led this advocacy campaign). NPR March 12, 2015

NPR - [Meet The 15-Year-Old From Rural Guatemala Who Addressed The U.N.](#)

#### Sample discussion questions post screening:

- How did the film make you feel? What was it that moved or affected you? Was there anything in the story that reminded you of your own experiences?
- What did you learn from watching the film? (About Elba and Emelin, about issues facing girls, or even about yourself)
- What are three issues facing girls in Guatemala that were mentioned in the film? Why

do you think these issues impact girls more than they do boys or adults?

· Do girls in your community face similar challenges? Is it considered acceptable for girls to lead change where you live? Why or why not?

· What can you do as an individual, and what can we do together, to improve the lives of girls around the world?

Homework assignment:

For the next unit on gender equity: see unit III Gender Equity

All materials in this unit adapted from and sourced from

<http://www.letgirlslead.org/poder>

## Gender Equity III

Time: Three 60 minute sessions: 1<sup>st</sup> is group planning; 2<sup>nd</sup> is presentation, 3<sup>rd</sup> is unit on Media and Gender Stereotype

Materials needed:

- Copies of Chapter 4, We're Not There Yet: Gender Equality. In *It's Your World: Get Informed, Get Inspired & Get Going* by Chelsea Clinton, 2015, pp. 133-175.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights booklet or handout
- Trailer of film, *Miss Representation*

Objective: Students will learn how current issues are related to gender equity. They will learn the connection between gender issues and human rights.

### First Session

Assign to each group of 4-5 students a chapter section for brainstorm session.

Instructions: allow them to present using any format: info graphics, PowerPoint, handouts, simple oral delivery. Let them decide.

Students must use at least 2-3 other sources to back up findings. Book chapter has sources (e.g. Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media: for #6)

Each group will have 10 minutes in 2<sup>nd</sup> session to share their findings in whatever manner they choose (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.)

Chapter Sections:

1. What girls can and can't do legally (voting, work, ownership of money, land, business, marrying far too young)
2. Health (pregnancy and babies, violence against women and girls)  
focus on:
  - violence knows no boundaries (nationalities, races, religions, income)
  - organizations or campaigns to educate people on this topic and what they do; pick 2
  - women and girls vulnerable to violence during conflict, wars
3. Computers, cell phones, and engineers
  - STEM fields: compare numbers of women vs. men
  - organizations to get students (boys and girls) interested in STEM
4. Whose running the country?
  - countries with the highest and lowest percentage of female representatives in government
5. Working hard
  - ratio of female to male earnings
  - breakdown of U.S. Boards of Directors by gender
  - bring up the "glass ceiling"
6. Screened out... where are girls and women?
  - news and entertainment industry: in both stories being told about them and from telling stories
  - percentage of women lead actors in film

## **Second Session**

Each group will have 10 minutes to share their findings in whatever manner they choose (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.)

## **Third Session**

Trailer of film, *Miss Representation* (2:47 or 8:40 version)

2:47 trailer:

<http://therepresentationproject.org/film/miss-representation/>

8:40 trailer:

<https://vimeo.com/24740174>

Objective: To have a discussion around media's portrayal of women and to gain media literacy insight.

Guiding questions:

Is it accurate; why or why not?

What was your gut reaction to the film (exaggerated, true, general comments, etc.)?

The Issue: The media is selling young people the idea that girls' and women's value lies in their youth, beauty, and sexuality, and not in their capacity as leaders. Boys learn that their success is tied to dominance, power, and aggression. We must value people as whole human beings, not gendered stereotypes.

*Miss Representation* exposes how mainstream media and culture contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

The film draws back a curtain to reveal a glaring reality we live with every day but fail to see – how the media's limited and often disparaging portrayals of women and girls makes it difficult for women to feel powerful and achieve leadership positions.

In a society where media is the most persuasive force shaping cultural norms, the collective message we receive is that a woman's value and power lie in her youth, beauty, and sexuality, and not in her capacity as a leader. While women have made great strides in leadership over the past few decades, the United States is still 33rd out of the 49 highest income countries when it comes to women in the national legislature. And it's not better outside of government. Women make up only 4.6% of S&P 500 CEOs and 17% of directors, executive producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors working on the top 250 domestic grossing films.

Sourced from

<http://therepresentationproject.org/film/miss-representation/>

# Empowerment

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

Alice Walker

American Writer, Poet and Activist

Time: 50 minutes

Materials needed:

White board or chalk board to show PowerPoint with definitions as below

Poetry pieces (2) from *The Freedom Writers Diary* (see below)

Computer equipment for display of definitions, art and music sections below

Definitions:

- Empowerment as entailing a process of change that involves the ability to make choices and have alternatives (Kabeer, 1999)
- Empowerment addresses the capacity to gain power and control over one's decisions and resources that affect one's life (Shah, 2011)
- Optimally, empowerment is used to signal processes of social transformation, which include personal, social, political and economic changes in relation to access to resources, agency and outcomes that tend in the direction of substantive gender equality (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011; Monkman, 2011; Murphy-Graham, 2012).

Review definitions: have different students read each one aloud.

Exercise: ask class to share out loud the answer to this question and then discuss:

How do you define empowerment?

It’s important to look inward and think critically about yourself. Questions to ask for reflection:

- Who am I and what’s my identity/how do I identify myself?
- Does my gender influence my leadership capability?
- What are my goals?
- What stereotypes does society hold toward women/men and leadership?

Do you see examples of empowering situations and/or those that disempower individuals (in the U.S. or globally)?

Write on this sheet and share out if comfortable doing so.

Talking Points only to serve as examples of and to think about; not for lengthy discussion:

Here in U.S.:

- What about role of girls and boys in relationships: are those always empowering or might there be times when it a lack of a choice in the relationship?
- Bullying (exerting power over someone else through teasing, name-calling or more serious physical acts)
- Teen dating violence (abusive relationship)
- Discrimination  
(stereotyping groups of people: attaching labels to the physically or mentally challenged, assuming certain students cannot advance beyond high school; racial profiling)

How to empower yourself: a *process* of; not for lengthy discussion); just to point out:

- Power of making positive choices;
- Your voice matters: tell someone if situation calls for it
- A call to action; find an ally and take a stand; be proactive in appropriate and safe ways

Poetry: 25 minutes (“Stand” and “They Say, I Say”: below in Poetry section)

After handout of poetry sheets, ask for volunteers to read each one. Have students write and/or draw their reflections on the sheets for their own personal use.

Discussion: Given the brief empowerment lesson and reflecting on the previous human rights and gender sessions:

What did these poems bring up for you?

How did you relate to either or both?

Were there words or phrases that resonated with you? If so, why?

Ask them to write their own short poem or just journal/write whatever they would like as a result of all these learning sessions. Treat it like a free write (let them explore and write whatever they choose to respond to this learning unit).

Optional 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson on empowerment: Empowerment utilizing art and music tied into human rights: Drawing while listening to music in background

Time: 50 minutes

Materials needed:

Sheets of white paper (8.5 x 11) for each student and colored markers, pens

Music or art of choice (1 piece of either) from students on human rights related to empowerment and activism

Music examples: U-2 - Ordinary Love, Aretha Franklin –Respect, Mary J Blige – Doubt.

Have these clips on youtube.com to play.

Art: Corita Kent: artist, activist, and educator, to illustrate a commitment to social justice, activism, and peace. Give short introduction to artist and show samples of work: her prints of phrases over pictures illustrating activism through art

<http://corita.org/>

Let students illustrate their own view of human rights, gender equity, and empowerment on paper, either through drawing or writing a response to what they saw/heard. This is an extra unit to teach about all the previous topics in a different format, utilizing art in the broadest terms.

## Poetry

Poetry, “Stand”  
Diary 88

Dear Diary,

This is the poem I wrote that Ms. G asked me to read to Richard Riley (\*) at the dinner. I couldn't believe I was sitting at the head table with all the big shots. I sat next to Ms. G's parents. Her stepmom, Karen, held my hand because I was so nervous. When I finished reading the poem, I got a standing ovation.

Stay Black—

Stay Proud

Stay White—

Stay Proud

Stay Brown—

Stay Proud

Stay Yellow—

Stay Proud...

Don't be afraid to be what you are,

'cause all you can be, is you!

You'll never be anything else but you,

so be the best you, you can be.

Keep it *real*—

by all means,

at all times.

Whether a lawyer, a doctor, a football player,  
a toilet cleaner, a garbage handler, a panhandler—  
keep it *real*

and still—

be the *best* you can be.

Have pride, have dignity, *stand!*

Stand proud, talk proud, act proud, be proud!

Don't lay down,

back down,

bow down,

run away,

sell out yourself,

sell into criticism.

Be real and realize that the ones who criticize,  
best recognize that you are you—

take it or leave it.

“MMM HMM!”

I knew you’d get it.

Get what?

The stuff—

the stuff called pride, that attitude, that aura,  
your identity, your self, your pride, peace of mind,  
worry free

See, I can’t be you, but I’m a damn good ME!

Righteous.

Source: Gruwell, E. (1999). *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. p. 173.

(\*) Note: Richard Riley was U.S. Secretary of Education at the time as referenced above.

Poetry, "They Say, I Say"  
Diary 103

Dear Diary,

Growing up, I always assumed I would either drop out of school or get pregnant. So when Ms. G. started talking about college, it was like a foreign language to me. Didn't she realize that girls like me don't go to college? Except for Ms. G., I don't know a single female who's graduated from high school, let alone gone to college. Instead, all the girls my age are already knocked up by some cholo. Like they say, if you're born in the 'hood, you're bound to die in it.

So when Ms. G. kept saying that "I could do anything," "go anywhere," and "be anyone"—even the President, I thought she was crazy. I always thought that the only people who went to college were rich white people. How did she expect me to go to college? After all, I live in the ghetto and my skin is brown.

But Ms. G. kept drilling into my head that it didn't matter where I came from or the color of my skin. She even gave me a book called *Growing Up Chicano* about people who look like me, but made it out of the ghetto.

In class today she made us do a speech about our future goals. I guess some of her madness was rubbing off on me because I found myself thinking about becoming a teacher. I began to think I could teach young girls like me that they too could "be somebody."

I had planned to tell the class that I wanted to become a teacher, but after hearing what everybody else wanted to be... a lawyer, a doctor, an advertiser, I announced that "Someday I'm going to be the first Latina Secretary of Education." Surprisingly, nobody laughed. Instead they started clapping and cheering. Someone even told me that they could picture me taking over Secretary Riley's job. The more they clapped, the more I began to believe that it was actually possible.

For the first time, I realized that what people say about living in the ghetto and having brown skin doesn't have to apply to me. So when I got home, I wrote this poem.

They Say, I Say

They say I am brown,  
I say  
I am proud.

They say I only know how to cook  
I say  
I know how to write a book  
So  
don't judge me by the way I look

They say I am brown  
I say  
I am proud

They say I'm not the future of this nation  
I say  
Stop giving me discrimination  
Instead  
I'm gonna use my education  
to help build the human nation.

I can't wait to read it to the class tomorrow.

Source: Gruwell, E. (1999). *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. p. 203.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Clinton, C. (2015). *It's your world: Get informed, get inspired & get going*. New York, NY: Random House.

Good source for tolerance of and respect for all people, and the environment. It's a book about some of the bigger issues our world and particularly kids face; about solutions young people and adults have created and supported to help make their families, cities, and our world healthier, safer and more equal.

Clinton Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation:

No Ceilings: The Full Participation Project

The two foundations have joined forces to gather data and analyze the gains made for women and girls over the last two decades, as well as the gaps that remain.

It has great graphics, interactive mapping, and videos.

<http://noceilings.org/about/>

Young men can end the cycle of violence. (5:38)

<http://noceilings.org/ending-violence/>

Short film clip: Men and boys have to be part of the solution.

It's not a girls' or women's or black or white or poor issue; it's everyone issue.

NPR Series October 2015. In many countries, the decisions teens make at 15 can determine the rest of their lives. But, often, girls don't have much say — parents, culture and tradition decide for them. In a new series, *#15Girls*, NPR explores the lives of 15-year-old girls who are seeking to take control and change their fate. Link has most audios of different stories. Hearing voices via radio is a good medium to learn from those outside the U.S. One segment is on U.S. girls.

<http://www.npr.org/series/446115168/-15girls?source=blog3>

The Representation Project

Using film as a catalyst for cultural transformation, The Representation Project inspires individuals and communities to challenge and overcome limiting stereotypes so that everyone, regardless of gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, or circumstance, can fulfill their human potential.

<http://therepresentationproject.org/>

Young, Geeky and Black: Ghana. BBC, December 2015 (27:00)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p038dxtw>

Like much of Africa, Ghana has a flourishing coding scene. What's a little different is that here there's a big emphasis on access for women and girls. This radio show introduces us to people and organizations working on this initiative from those teaching coding to young Muslim girls in Accra's poorest neighborhood to aspiring programmers looking to make apps and games for audiences thirsty for African content.