



# GiRLS Inspire

Learning for empowerment.

GiRLS Inspire is a partnership between the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and community organisations in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania to address the barriers keeping girls and women from full participation in society.

Girls are a critical agent for social change and global development. Closing the gender gap during adolescence in education, economic activity and health will significantly increase national economic growth and well-being.<sup>1</sup> But barriers such as child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), distance to school, security concerns, cultural values and the costs of schooling all prevent girls and women from participating in educational opportunities.

Thanks to a grant from the Government of Australia, COL is using open and distance learning and technology to support the schooling and skills training of girls and women in India. These efforts are crucial to India achieving eight of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

## INDIA



### REACHING THE UNREACHED, CREATING SAFE LEARNING SPACES



Candle-making training for girls and women.

GiRLS Inspire's partner in India was the Mann Deshi Foundation, which is dedicated to empowering female entrepreneurs and their communities. The project enabled them to expand their reach to girls and women they had not previously approached.

They created mobile training centres using two buses equipped with self-learning materials, laptops and vocational training equipment.

Forty-one gender-sensitive courses were developed on life skills and vocational skills. They were delivered face-to-face and via community radio. In total, 6,033 girls across 150 villages were trained in at least three subjects each.

<sup>1</sup> Chaaban, J., & Cunningham, W. (2011). *Measuring the economic gain of investing in girls: The girl effect dividend*. Policy Research Working Paper WPS 5753. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/730721468326167343/Measuring-the-economic-gain-of-investing-in-girls-the-girl-effect-dividend>





*Schoolchildren sharing their experiences of the project on community radio.*

## BETTER LIVELIHOODS, ECONOMIC GROWTH

GIRLS Inspire was able to build upon the Mann Deshi Foundation's experience from its existing Young Girls Program for ages 15 to 25, which aims to improve their self-confidence, educate them on reproductive health and provide them with skills to become financially independent.

After their life skills and vocational training, 312 girls were in income-generating opportunities as interns, employees or entrepreneurs. Learning financial management and having access to banking was critical to their sustained success and economic independence. By the project's end, 490 girls and women had opened bank accounts.

## BUILDING HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY, COMMUNITY

Community workshops on girls' education, gender equality, health and hygiene, and the impact of child marriage built trust between the communities and the project. Participants included nurses, Accredited Social Health Activists, mayors, village workers, advocates, doctors and teachers.

Tablets and multimedia presentations facilitated the sharing of previous work and successes in other villages. A strong storytelling approach was used, which led to greater buy-in from parents and husbands.

The Mann Deshi Foundation's radio station reaches 170,000 householders across 104 villages in Maharashtra, in their local dialect. The team developed radio content on health skills and financial literacy and produced 14 modules on various topics, such as income and expenditure, savings, banking, the importance of education, loan repayment, HIV/AIDS and child marriage. Based on a sample from 31 of the villages, the community radio programme reached an estimated 42,798 people in these 31 villages alone, at least 4,000 of whom were girls and women.



*A GIRLS Inspire graduate is now running her own small business.*



*Opening a bank account.*