



Six-Month Interim Progress Report

Submitted to: Together Women Rise (RISE)

Reporting Period: March, 2021 – December, 2021

Report Date: January 3, 2022

This report is an update on how Together Women Rise has helped to provide health and safety education to hundreds of girls in Bangladesh, through its partnership with Speak Up for the Poor.

1. Project Profile

a. Organization Name	Speak Up for the Poor
b. Project Title	Girls Education Program: Girls Health and Safety Training
c. Grant Amount	\$26,189
d. Contact Person	Mr. David Palmer Director of Development dpalmer@speakupforthe poor.org (909) 589-9065
e. Organization Mailing Address, and Website Address	3714 Beechglan Dr. Glendale, CA 91214 www.speakupforthe poor.org

2. Brief Recap of Outcomes the Project was Designed to Achieve

The main goal of the Girls Health and Safety Training Project, as stated in our grant application, is to provide girls and women in our Girls Education Program (GEP) with the information and resources they need for optimal health, safety, and well-being in their context.

The project was designed to achieve the following outcomes for every GEP girl participating in our Girls Health and Safety Training:

1. How to properly wash her hands, and teach family members to do the same.

2. An age-appropriate understanding of feminine hygiene issues, how to access products for feminine hygiene, who to talk to about it, and how to receive help.
3. An understanding of the basics of infections and skin diseases, how to avoid them, and how to address them.
4. Both a medical evaluation and a self-evaluation to assess personal health.
5. An understanding the basics of water hygiene for bathing, cleaning, and cooking, and a self-evaluation of one's living environment to identify potential water hygiene issues.
6. Participation in a village youth club to consider how to solve local health and safety problems, such as lighting, pathways, latrines, or obtaining needed supplies. Learning to problem-solve and think creatively.
7. An understanding of everyone's right to bodily autonomy, the right to make the decisions that affect one's own body and life, and who to talk to about unwanted touching or abuse.
8. An understanding of local laws regarding child abuse, child marriage, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and spousal rape, and who to talk to if they are at risk of, or experience, any of these.
9. Growth in self-confidence, determination to reach personal goals, using one's voice, and teaching others about health and safety.

3. Has Funding Changed for this Project?

Funding has not changed for this project.

4. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal?

There are two noteworthy changes in our project situation.

First, Speak Up has an MOU with a new local NGO partner in Bangladesh through whom some of our Girls Education Program activities will be implemented. Through June 2021 we had been working in partnership with PROSES, but starting on July 1, 2021, we have been implementing many of our GEP components through another local NGO, SHARE-Bangladesh. This transition was for purely administrative reasons. Because we still have the same GEP staff and beneficiaries, this transition has had no negative effect on the implementation of the Girls Health and Safety Training program.

Secondly, because of the global COVID pandemic and the resulting restrictions enforced by the Bangladeshi government, we have had to modify some of the components of the Girls Health and Safety Training program. Because any meetings of more than 8-10 people had been prohibited in Bangladesh for nearly 18 months, from March 2020 through September 2021, during that time we were unable to have large, grade-specific meetings of beneficiaries in the GEP. Instead we have held all of our trainings and meetings in smaller groups of girls in their homes or local areas.

5. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?

Our grant proposal indicated that in 2021, the Girls Health and Safety Program would directly benefit 1,665 girls and young women, and would indirectly benefit at least 2,497 people. These numbers were not substantially changed during the implementation of the Girls Health and Safety Training program.

6. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

There are several challenges that we have faced.

First, as documented in several places in this report, the restrictions placed on large group meetings by the Bangladeshi government due to the COVID pandemic has significantly affected our training structures. We adapted to this challenge most effectively by holding hundreds of smaller training sessions with girls in groups of 8-10 rather than in larger groups.

Schools being closed for nearly 18 months across the country also led to an unusually high percentage of girls under 18 being forced into illegal child marriages the past two years. This has given us the challenge of retaining girls in our GEP, as more have dropped out of school and been illegally married than in past years. We have adapted to this challenge by restructuring our staff team to create a new Advocacy Team to handle child marriage cases, enabling the rest of our GEP staff to focus more directly on the training and mentoring issues involved with this Girls Health and Safety Training.

Due to COVID the notoriously inefficient Bangladeshi government bureaucracy was even slower than usual during the past 18 months. This affected our ability to easily get project funds into Bangladesh and our ability to get project budgets and programs approved by the necessary authorities. We met these challenges by temporarily using a Reserve Fund of cash held in Bangladesh; meeting frequently with local and national leaders to speed along the delayed processes; and forming a partnership with a new local NGO that was more efficient and timely in its performance. All these strategies have allowed our Girls Health and Safety Training to continue on largely as expected, but with small group meetings rather than large trainings being the main modification.

7. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

Other than the notes below, and the modifications noted in Question 8 below, our original project objectives remain unchanged.

1. How to properly wash her hands, and teach family members to do the same: Objective remains unchanged.
2. An age-appropriate understanding of feminine hygiene issues, how to access products for feminine hygiene, who to talk to about it, and how to receive help: Objective remains unchanged.
3. An understanding of the basics of infections and skin diseases, how to avoid them, and how to address them: Objective remains unchanged.
4. Both a medical evaluation and a self-evaluation to assess personal health: Objective remains unchanged, though delayed as discussed below.

5. An understanding the basics of water hygiene for bathing, cleaning, and cooking, and a self-evaluation of one's living environment to identify potential water hygiene issues: Objective remains unchanged.
6. Participation in a village youth club to consider how to solve local health and safety problems, such as lighting, pathways, latrines, or obtaining needed supplies. Learning to problem-solve and think creatively: As discussed below, this is the only objective that will likely not be accomplished.
7. An understanding of everyone's right to bodily autonomy, the right to make the decisions that affect one's own body and life, and who to talk to about unwanted touching or abuse: Objective remains unchanged, though delayed as discussed below.
8. An understanding of local laws regarding child abuse, child marriage, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and spousal rape, and who to talk to if they are at risk of, or experience, any of these: Objective remains unchanged, though delayed as discussed below.
9. Growth in self-confidence, determination to reach personal goals, using one's voice, and teaching others about health and safety: Objective remains unchanged.

8. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

1. How to properly wash her hands, and teach family members to do the same: Especially because of the COVID pandemic, this is something that we have repeatedly emphasized throughout 2021 in various events and meetings. All beneficiaries have received training on this simple concept, and have several times during the COVID pandemic received soap, hand sanitizer, and other sanitation items to aid them in their personal health, particularly hand washing.
2. An age-appropriate understanding of feminine hygiene issues, how to access products for feminine hygiene, who to talk to about it, and how to receive help: This is an issue regularly discussed and taught about in various GEP settings. As mentioned, because of COVID restrictions we have been unable to implement the full extent of this training that we had wanted to at larger training events, but the discussion of these issues continues in smaller groups.
3. An understanding of the basics of infections and skin diseases, how to avoid them, and how to address them: Along with Objectives 7 and 8 below, this is the area of the Girls Health and Safety Training program most affected by COVID restrictions because, due to the inability to have large meetings, and because most qualified experts in these areas have been reluctant to do hundreds of smaller training sessions, we have been unable so far in 2021 to secure the right trainers and experts to help with these trainings. However, as the COVID restrictions are lifting in Bangladesh, it is more likely that in the last quarter of 2021 we will be able to hold large training meetings where these issues will be addressed. We have had some of these issues addressed in smaller meetings, however.
4. Both a medical evaluation and a self-evaluation to assess personal health: We have taught beneficiaries about medical issues, but have to date not done formal medical evaluations. In the

last quarter of 2021 we will be focusing more on this objective as, now that COVID restrictions have mostly lifted, we are more easily able to have nurses and other medical professionals hold medical camps for our beneficiaries at which we will have free medical evaluations for many girls and young women. During our Medical Seminars in November and December, at least 200 girls in the GEP have participated in basic medical self-evaluations, including taking their blood pressure and pulse; doing a checklist evaluating their food intake habits; and weighing in and learning to monitor their weight in a healthy way.

5. An understanding the basics of water hygiene for bathing, cleaning, and cooking, and a self-evaluation of one's living environment to identify potential water hygiene issues: Similar to Objective 1 above, because of the COVID pandemic this is something that we have repeatedly emphasized throughout 2021 in various events and meetings. All beneficiaries have received training on this simple concept, and besides several times during the COVID pandemic receiving soap, hand sanitizer, and other sanitation items to aid them in their personal health, our staff has helped girls understand water hygiene issues. We have not to date completed a survey or self-evaluation of each beneficiary's living environment, but this is something we will do through large group trainings in the first quarter of 2021.
6. Participation in a village youth club to consider how to solve local health and safety problems, such as lighting, pathways, latrines, or obtaining needed supplies. Learning to problem-solve and think creatively: Most youth club meetings have been disallowed during the entirety of 2021 to date because of the COVID restrictions whereby the Bangladeshi government did not allow us to meet other than in small groups. These groups might slowly pick up in the last quarter of 2021, but because youth clubs and other meetings will have other things on their agenda as things get back under way, many of these issues may be put on the back burner by local clubs, so this is the objective most likely to not be accomplished. We are less able to influence or control the content of local youth clubs than we are training events that we completely control and operate, hence the likelihood that these clubs will not have the time to take up this agenda.
7. An understanding of everyone's right to bodily autonomy, the right to make the decisions that affect one's own body and life, and who to talk to about unwanted touching or abuse: Along with Objectives 3 and 8, this is the area of the Girls Health and Safety Training program most affected by COVID restrictions because, due to the inability to have large meetings, and because most qualified experts in these areas have been reluctant to do hundreds of smaller training sessions, we have been unable so far in 2021 to secure the right trainers and experts to help with these trainings. However, as the COVID restrictions are lifting in Bangladesh, it is more likely that in the first quarter of 2021 we will be able to hold large training meetings where these issues will be addressed. We have had some of these issues addressed in smaller meetings, however.
8. An understanding of local laws regarding child abuse, child marriage, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and spousal rape, and who to talk to if they are at risk of, or experience, any of these: Along with Objectives 3 and 7, this is another area of the Girls Health and Safety Training program most affected by COVID restrictions because, due to the inability to have large meetings, and because most qualified experts in these areas have been reluctant to do hundreds of smaller training sessions, we have been unable so far in 2021 to secure the right trainers and experts to help with these trainings. However, as the COVID restrictions are lifting in Bangladesh, it is more likely that in the first quarter of 2021 we will be able to hold large

training meetings where these issues will be addressed. We have had some of these issues addressed in smaller meetings, however.

9. Growth in self-confidence, determination to reach personal goals, using one's voice, and teaching others about health and safety: This objective has been unchanged, and is in fact one of the ongoing strengths and focuses of our entire Girls Education Program. In every GEP meetings we talk about our core values – hard work, service, self-confidence – and emphasize girls to grow in their personal vision and determination. This is an ongoing positive of the GEP. We have also (in the last quarter of 2021) begun a new Life Skills Training Program involving 10 areas of life, helping girl gain skills and confidence in improving their life in each of 10 areas: Health, Safety, Job Experience, Driving, English, Law, Leadership, Computers, Saving and Budget Money, and Public Service. This is helping more than 1500 girls and young women in our GEP to gain confidence and skills in these crucial areas of development.

9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

As mentioned above, COVID restrictions have had a serious effect on our program because we have been unable to legally meet in large groups for nearly 18 months. As these restrictions are now largely lifted we will be able to resume large meetings soon, but it will take significant time to catch up on the content we missed. Therefore, some of our project timeline will take us into 2022.

As covid restrictions have loosened, during October through December 2021, we have been resuming our Health Training Seminars, where groups of up to 40 girls in a village come together for training on various health and safety topics. We have held 6 of these Seminars to date through December 2021. Pictures of these meetings are included in this interim report.

10. A message to the RISE membership and donors about the impact the grant is having on those being served, and/or on Speak Up and its mission.

As the greatest potential change agents in the world, girls living in poverty are the world's best investment. So we have been thrilled to received RISE funding which has enabled us to help train and influence many girls in rural poverty in Bangladesh who would otherwise be more vulnerable to violence, various health and safety problems, and even sexual abuse. While this struggle continues and will continue for many years to come, progress is being made. RISE members can be proud that their generous funding has helped more than 1,600 girls and young women involved in the GEP to continue building their lives with dignity, purpose and joy.

11. PHOTOS: Speak Up for the Poor confirms the right and gives consent to Together Women Rise to use all photos included in this report as per local law.

In addition to being included here in this report, these photos have been copied to our shared Dropbox folder in full resolution.



A Medical and Health Awareness Seminar in Kashipur Village Taught by GEP-Trained Nurses



A Medical and Health Awareness Seminar in Baratia Village



A Medical and Health Awareness Seminar in Dhopakhola Village



GEP Girls and Young Women in Dhopakhola Village attending a Health and Safety Training



A GEP Nursing student demonstrates a weight scale at a GEP health seminar, as another takes blood pressure readings in the background of the photo



GEP Girls with Health and Medical Files of Their Personal Health Records / Information

12. EXPENSE REPORTING: Please find below a list of expenditures incurred during this interim reporting period – from March to December, 2021 – which have been paid for with the Together Women Rise grant. (A two-month extension to our original six-month reporting end-date of October 2021 was approved by Dr. Veena Khandke, due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic on our project.)

1. **FACILITIES:** Most Facilities charges in section 1 have not yet been incurred, since due to the covid pandemic, we have not been able to meet in large meeting halls for grade level meetings as originally planned.

2. **MEDIA PRODUCTION:** We anticipate that these costs will be incurred in the remaining months of our project (January – April 2022) as we have more opportunity to rent and meet in larger meeting halls, assuming covid restrictions in Bangladesh continue to be relaxed in 2022.

3. **FOOD AND TRANSPORTATION:** To date we have spent proportionally more money on food and transportation for older GEP girls in grades 10 – 12, since they have generally had more ability to travel and attend small group health & safety trainings during the pandemic, than have the younger girls:

EXPENSES							
<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>FREQ.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Spent March - December 2021</u>
1. FACILITIES RENTAL	Facility Rental		\$ 50	1	36	\$ 1,800	0
	Chair - Table Rental		\$ 20	1	36	\$ 720	0
	Site Honorarium		\$ 10	1	36	\$ 360	360
	Cleanup Fees		\$ 20	1	36	\$ 720	0
	SUB-TOTAL					\$ 3,600	360
2. FOOD	6th Grade Meetings	Lunch and Snacks	\$ 1.75	150	6	\$ 1,575	640
	7th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	150	5	\$ 1,313	575
	8th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	150	5	\$ 1,313	575
	9th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	180	5	\$ 1,575	850
	10th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	180	5	\$ 1,575	1,675
	11th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	165	5	\$ 1,444	1,550
	12th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.75	155	5	\$ 1,356	1,470
	Staff Attendees	"	\$ 1.80	10	36	\$ 648	530
	SUB-TOTAL					\$ 10,798	7,865
3. TRAINING SUPPLIES	6th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	150	1	\$ 150	55
	6th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	150	1	\$ 300	110
	7th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	150	1	\$ 150	55
	7th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	150	1	\$ 300	110
	8th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	150	1	\$ 150	55
	8th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	150	1	\$ 300	110
	9th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	180	1	\$ 180	70
	9th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	180	1	\$ 360	130
	10th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	180	1	\$ 180	70
	10th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	180	1	\$ 360	130
	11th Grade Meetings	Pens, Notebooks, Handouts	\$ 1.00	165	1	\$ 165	60
	11th Grade Meetings	Sanitation Supplies	\$ 2.00	165	1	\$ 330	125
	12th Grade Meetings	Training Handbook	\$ 4.35	155	1	\$ 674	225
	SUB-TOTAL					\$ 3,599	1,305
4. MEDIA PRODUCTION	Sound System Rental	For each meeting	\$ 20	1	36	\$ 720	0
	Media Handouts	For each meeting	\$ 5	1	36	\$ 180	0
	Materials	Whiteboard, demo materials	\$ 100	1	1	\$ 100	0
	SUB-TOTAL					\$ 1,000	0
5. TRANSPORTATION	6th Grade Meetings	Roundtrip Transport - Average cos	\$ 1.15	150	6	\$ 1,035	45
	7th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	150	5	\$ 863	40
	8th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	150	5	\$ 863	40
	9th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	180	5	\$ 1,035	55
	10th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	180	5	\$ 1,035	115
	11th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	165	5	\$ 949	105
	12th Grade Meetings	"	\$ 1.15	155	5	\$ 891	90
	Staff Attendees	"	\$ 1.45	10	36	\$ 522	60
	SUB-TOTAL					\$ 7,192	550
	GRAND TOTAL					\$ 26,189	10,080