



Final Report

Submitted to: Together Women Rise (RISE)

Reporting Period: December 2023 – December 2024

Report Date: January 24, 2025

This is our Final Report on funding received from Together Women Rise to partner with Speak Up for the Poor in providing health and safety education throughout 2024 to more than 2,320 girls and young women associated with our Girls Education Program in Bangladesh.

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	\$50,000
d. Contact Person	Mr. David Palmer Director of Development dpalmer@speakupforthe poor.org (909) 589-9065
e. Organization Mailing Address, and Website Address	3714 Beechglenn 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 was to provide girls and women in our Girls Education Program (GEP) and in our working area 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. Proper hand washing, and ability to teach family members and others 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 or address them.
4. An understanding of 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.
5. Medical evaluations and/or self-evaluations to assess personal health of GEP girls and young women.
6. Learning to problem-solve and think creatively about any local health and safety problems.
7. Understanding aspects of safe, wise, and healthy interpersonal relationships.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Growth in self-confidence, determination to reach personal goals, using one's voice, and teaching others about health and safety.

These objectives largely overlap with the objectives for this program two years ago when we received our first grant from Together Women Rise. Similar topics are being addressed, but in 2024 our Health and Safety Program was much improved, because we hired a full-time, dedicated Health and Safety Team consisting of three young women, GEP graduates themselves, who have been trained through nursing school and higher education as nurses and as medical assistants. These three women oversaw and led all of our GEP Village Health Seminars (36 were conducted in 2024) and our Large-Group Health and Safety Training meetings (16 were conducted in 2024). The three women hired onto our Health and Safety also provided teaching and training regarding health and safety topics to the young women enrolled in our College GEP, and in our Women's Dormitory. They also worked to integrate health and safety training and the objectives above into other meetings and trainings attended by GEP girls and women. As a result, our Health and Safety curriculum and content in 2024 was at a higher level compared to previous years.

Also, with this dedicated three-person team we significantly increased and improved the attention and individualized advising and counseling that GEP girls receive in regard to being safe, healthy, and wise in the context of interpersonal relationships with others. This subject received much greater attention than it did in previous years, as did the subjects of mental health, and sexuality.

3. What was accomplished in connection with this project? Address each stated objective. If any project objectives were changed, please explain the circumstances leading to the modification.

1. How to properly wash hands and teach family members to do the same: All beneficiaries received training on this simple concept, and on multiple occasions received soap, hand sanitizer, and other sanitation items to aid them in their hand washing and personal health. As basic as it sounds, this simple procedure can be overlooked but is very important in the Bangladeshi context. And, providing soap and sanitizer is a great benefit to poor families.
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 was an issue regularly discussed and taught about in our various GEP trainings, an aspect of the curriculum in all of our

health and safety meetings. In Bangladesh these issues can easily be overlooked or considered shameful, so it has been important to discuss these issues openly in a culturally sensitive way.

3. An understanding of the basics of infections and skin diseases, how to avoid them, and how to address them: Throughout 2024 we provided this education to GEP girls and women of all grade levels at the training events we conducted. Many girls experience skin issues from unclean water and other environmental factors, so this is an important aspect of our curriculum.
4. Medical evaluations and self-evaluations to assess personal health: The health care professionals on our three-person Health and Safety team and have conducted medical evaluations for many GEP girls and young women, as well as instruction on ways girls can monitor their own health. They have also provided personal health and medical information packets to all the girls and young women of the GEP in 2024.
5. An understanding of 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: This objective was repeatedly emphasized throughout 2024 at our events and training meetings, and at smaller gatherings in individual villages. All beneficiaries have received training on this concept and have received sanitation items to aid them in their personal health. Beneficiaries also completed a self-evaluation of their own living environment in 2024.
6. Learning to problem-solve and think creatively about any local health and safety problems: In our various GEP settings, our staff regularly encouraged GEP girls and young women to consider how the health and safety principles we are teaching them apply not just to themselves, but to their village communities and living spaces, and how to address issues affecting health and safety in their households and communities. We also formed Girls Leadership Clubs in each village to represent the GEP girls in that village. Our Health and Safety team met consistently with these leaders and helped them become more active in thinking through health issues in their home and community.
7. Understanding aspects of safe, wise, and healthy interpersonal relationships: In 2024, we significantly increased the individualized attention that GEP girls receive regarding safety in the context of relationships with others. With a dedicated three-person Health and Safety team, we were able to provide much advice and counseling of the girls regarding the specific interpersonal relationships in which they were involved, and advice and counsel regarding mental health and sexuality.
8. 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: This subject was addressed for girls and young women of all grade levels at our events and trainings in 2024.
9. 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: Education on this subject was provided to girls and young women of all grade levels at our events and trainings in 2024.

10. Growth in self-confidence, determination to reach personal goals, using one's voice, and teaching others about health and safety: Girls in our working context rarely get the message that they have agency to truly build their lives and futures. It is often a big mental obstacle for them to deeply believe that they can do so. Shaped by cultural forces, many girls tend to have a very traditional mindset, that their parents will eventually decide everything, and when married their husband will decide everything. This level of thinking is an obstacle that many girls and young women must overcome. So, we are always seeking to develop a stronger sense of agency and self-confidence in the girls and young women with whom we work. Throughout 2024 we continued to provide regular teaching, training, and encouragement regarding self-confidence and perseverance. These are among our core values. Girls and young women in the GEP also see the positive example of our staff team and receive individualized counsel and input from our staff.

4. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?

The number of beneficiaries did not change. We directly served 2,320 girls and young women enrolled in the GEP and on our "Friends List" (a waiting list to join the GEP). All of these girls and young women participated in at least one of our village seminars or large group meetings, and also received additional health and safety related content at other regularly scheduled GEP events. We also indirectly reached about 3,480 additional women and girls who are family members of the GEP girls and young women directly served.

5. What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address those challenges?

Our working area of Bangladesh experienced a terrible heat wave in March - April 2024. Power was out for days at a time, which made everything more physically challenging, and also led to many health challenges in the villages. Climate challenges and accompanying physical challenges such as this are common in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, our dedicated staff team persevered, traveling daily on often overcrowded roadways to the 37 villages and urban areas where our GEP students live, and implementing our program in each of those communities. Our staff work very hard in a challenging context, and we regularly express how much we appreciate and honor them.

Dengue fever, carried by mosquitoes, has also been a huge health issue in Bangladesh this past year. We have responded to this by adding teaching on this issue to every Health Seminar, by providing medications for the symptoms of Dengue fever, and by conducting health screenings for many village girls. We have also had all 75 high-school girls in one of our dormitories get dengue fever screening and blood tests.

Another challenge is that there is a very low overall baseline in Bangladesh for psychological and mental health awareness. This is not an aspect of the culture that has developed to anywhere near the degree that it has in the United States. We responded to this challenge with additional training on these subjects for those we hire onto our staff team, to develop a higher level of quality in individualized care for girls, and ability to effectively counsel them. Members of our Health and Safety team have even provided counseling to several girls who under the extreme pressure of their lives had survived a suicide attempt.

There are also many cultural obstacles and ways of thinking that make it difficult for Bangladeshi girls to think about their long-term planning for health and safety. As mentioned already above, girls in our context rarely get the message that they have agency to truly build their lives and futures. It is often a big mental obstacle for them to deeply believe that they can do so. Shaped by cultural forces, many girls tend to have a very traditional mindset, that their parents will eventually decide everything, and when married their husband will decide everything. This level of thinking is a challenge we work to overcome. We are always seeking to develop a stronger sense of agency and self-confidence in the girls and young women with whom we work. We approach this through regular teaching, training, and encouragement. The girls and young women of the GEP also see the positive example of our staff team and receive individualized counsel and input from our staff.

6. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new Executive Director, significant project staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, etc.

A significant change occurred in 2024: After many years of bureaucratic delays, Speak Up was finally granted official registration with the Bangladesh's Bureau of NGO Affairs. This is entirely positive and beneficial to Speak Up. With official government registration, our operations in Bangladesh become even more efficient and productive. Some slower government bureaucratic processes are now eliminated, no longer required of us. Speak Up also saves money that we previously had to pay to a third-party to co-manage some of our financial transactions, prior to having the official registration. Also, we are now able to purchase assets directly for Speak Up Bangladesh, which will create new possibilities in the future for our college women's dormitories, among other initiatives. This official government registration also signals even more clearly to the GEP students and staff that Speak Up is in Bangladesh to stay, committed for the long term regardless of any setbacks or opposition. We are grateful to have finally received this official Bangladesh government registration in 2024.

7. What were the most important lessons learned?

1. Continuing to learn about the challenges poor village girls face in feminine hygiene issues, and providing basic hygiene approaches that address this challenge, while discussing the subject in a culturally appropriate way.
2. Addressing the most common significant health issues in our context, including Dengue Fever, Hookworm, and breast cancer screening. We were not aware of such high incidences of breast cancer or lumps among young Bangladeshi girls prior to this year, but the Health and Safety Team has learned a lot about this over the past year and is now implementing pre-checks with the girls and young women to get ahead of more advanced cancer problems.
3. Continuing to develop our ability to counsel and advise girls on the issues of self-harm and suicide, good touch and bad touch (by others), and related issues that affect girls' mental health.

8. What has changed within your organization as a result of this project?

1. We now have a full-time Health & Safety Team of three staff that we intend to keep for as long as possible as a fully functioning department. So even though the grant was for one year, it has catalyzed this and we hope that it will remain permanent.
2. Many more girls continue to be inspired to want to be nurses, doctors, and medical assistants as they have seen our program in action. We now have 70 young women in nursing school, a big increase, and we anticipate that there will be at least 20 new nursing students every year for the foreseeable future.
3. The three Health and Safety Team staff are GEP grads, so we continue to grow that part of our work, hiring and training up our own GEP young women to be on our staff team.
4. The women on our staff team have become more confident and direct in speaking with girls about women's health issues, so we have taken some significant steps in reducing taboos about talking about menstrual issues and other women's health issues and built a better atmosphere to discuss real issues.

9. Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.

1. We partnered with three local girls' high schools to do Health Camps, so besides our GEP girls, there were several hundred other high school girls outside of our GEP (not included in the numbers that we are reporting here) who also received health training.
2. Our Health and Safety Team learned more about the feminine health issues and deficiencies that poor Bangladeshi girls face, and how to educate and empower girls in this most crucial area, than was expected at first.
3. A few different health topics have become more anticipated and relevant than expected, especially Dengue Fever, and diseases related to hookworm.
4. The greatest benefit of our Girls Health and Safety Training is that more GEP girls than ever before want to become nurses. Every girl in the entire GEP was able to see a young woman (ages 20-24) from their exact same background teaching about health. This greatly inspired our young girls to want to become nurses or other medical professionals.

10. Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address those challenges in the future?

There were no major strategic changes, beyond the greater focus on feminine hygiene issues and other health topics that arose this year through our training, mentioned in section 7 above, and partnering with local high schools to reach more girls, mentioned in section 9 above.

11. Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly, by the project?

In 2024, the Girls Health and Safety Program directly benefited 2,320 girls and young women, and indirectly benefited at least 3,480 people (family members of the girls and young women in the GEP).

(This number does not include several hundred other high school girls who are not a part of the GEP, as mentioned in section 9 above.)

12. What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (e.g. surveys, observation)? Be specific and include measurable results.

1. We kept attendance records at all large and small group training seminars with all GEP beneficiaries during the course of the Girls Health and Safety Program in 2024, so that we would know how many girls and women from each village participated in our training events.
2. Attendees completed pre-training and post-training questionnaires at every Health Camp and Health Seminar, so we measured what girls knew before the events, and what they learned from them.
3. Health cards and medical information packets have now been distributed to every GEP girl by our Health and Safety Team, by which they can track any weight changes, any issues with their menstrual cycle, their schedule of doing breast self-exams for early breast cancer screening, their vital signs each time the Health and Safety Team interacts with them, etc.
4. Every GEP girl also signs for the health packets we provide, which include feminine hygiene items, soap, cleaning supplies, etc.

13. If the project is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.

We brought three Health and Safety Team members onto our staff team at the outset of this project in late 2023. Some of the funding provided by this grant from Together Women Rise was allocated to partially cover these Health and Safety Team salaries (see budget numbers below). Going forward, our intention is to continue with this department as an ongoing aspect of the GEP. We do not have new grant funding at present toward it, but we will continue to fundraise in 2025 toward ongoing health and safety education for the girls and women of the GEP.

14. Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the grant cycle which have been paid for with the Dining for Women / Together Women Rise grant.

The table below details our actual expenses for the 36 GEP Village Health Seminars and the 16 Large-Group Health and Safety Training meetings conducted in 2024.

In late 2023, we originally budgeted \$50,284 for these expenses. Together Women Rise provided a grant for nearly this entire amount (the Rise grant totaled \$50,000). As indicated in the table below, we ultimately spent slightly less than we originally budgeted – a total of \$50,177.

GEP HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM EXPENSES

Final Report of Expenses from December 2023 - December 2024

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT ORIGINALLY BUDGETED</u>	<u>AMOUNT SPENT 12/23 - 12/24</u>
(1) VILLAGE HEALTH SEMINARS - 36 conducted in 2024			
A - Village Health Seminars	Health Supplies	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 3,940.00
	Medical Equipment	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,365.00
	Feminine Hygiene Products for girls	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 2,135.00
	Honorarium for health professional	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 805.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 8,245.00
(2) LARGE GROUP TRAINING MEETINGS - 16 meetings conducted in 2024			
A - Facility Expenses	Facility Rental	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 2,180.00
	Chair - Table Rental	\$ 320.00	\$ 475.00
	Site Honorarium	\$ 800.00	\$ 1,190.00
	Cleanup Fees	\$ 400.00	\$ 620.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 2,720.00	\$ 4,465.00
B - Food (lunch and snacks for all participants)	All Grade Level Meetings	\$ 5,804.00	\$ 7,585.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 5,804.00	\$ 7,585.00
C-1 - Training Supplies (pens, notebooks, handouts)	All Grade Level Meetings	\$ 2,710.00	\$ 5,230.00
C-2 - Sanitation Supplies	All Grade Level Meetings	\$ 6,775.00	\$ 4,490.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 9,485.00	\$ 9,720.00
D - Media Production	Sound System Rental	\$ 320.00	\$ 580.00
	Media Handouts	\$ 80.00	\$ 65.00
	Materials	\$ 100.00	\$ 32.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 500.00	\$ 677.00
E - Transportation	All Grade Level Meetings	\$ 3,675.00	\$ 5,210.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 3,675.00	\$ 5,210.00
(3) NURSING SCHOOL	Nursing Student Fees	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 9,145.00
	Nursing School Training Events	\$ 1,900.00	\$ 1,140.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 11,900.00	\$ 10,285.00
(4) SALARIES	Nurse / MATS Staff	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,415.00
	Nursing Staff	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 1,575.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 3,990.00
	GRAND TOTAL	\$ 50,284.00	\$ 50,177.00

15. Did this grant and relationship with DFW / RISE assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?

Our Board of Directors includes several medical professionals, and other medical professionals are donors to Speak Up as well. All of them continue to appreciate the growth of the GEP in the area of health and safety. We anticipate that this will continue to drive funding toward this initiative going forward. We have not received grant funding earmarked toward this in 2025, but we are in conversation with a group of supporters who are health professionals, about developing a Community Health Nursing program in our working area. The new Health and Safety department in the GEP is a great step in that direction.

There is no new public recognition that we received that we are aware of, other than local government officials expressing thanks to our staff for helping so many girls and families with the health, safety, and education issues described in this report.

16. 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 2,300 girls and young women involved in the GEP to continue building their lives with dignity, purpose and joy. Thank you so much for your support!

17. 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, below, these photos have also been copied to our shared Dropbox folder in full resolution.



Our GEP Girls Health and Safety Team – a GEP-trained nurse, and two GEP-trained medical assistants. This team conducted all of our health and safety events in 2024.



GEP girls and young women learn from our Health and Safety Team at a Health Seminar



A nurse demonstrating a blood pressure reading at a Health Seminar



GEP girls and young women after a Health and Safety event



GEP girls and young with personal health tracking cards, after an event

18. Stories, Experiences, and Quotes from Women and Girls whose lives were altered by the funded project, preferably in their own words:

“From the Health Seminar I learned how to measure blood pressure, and how to be healthy in life.”
Protiva, Class 11

“At the Health Seminar I learned about the tasks to do during menstruation and reduce my pain.”
Mukta, Class 9

“I learned about Dengue fever and its prevention from the Health Seminar.” **Srabonti**, Class 10

“I got a lot of information about breast cancer from the Health Seminar.” **Anima**, entering nursing school soon

“One of the special things I learned from the Health Seminar is about good touch and bad touch, and that we should be conscious about that.” **Sushmita**, Class 10

“I learned that when we are in too much tension and depression about how to control anger, and we also now know how to breathe a long breath then release our body gently, to relax.” **Rumi**, Class 9

“I have learned about why we take different vaccines from the Health Seminar, so now I understand that topic.” **Tithi**, entering college soon