

THE NEW GIRLS'
MOVEMENT:
IMPLICATIONS FOR
YOUTH PROGRAMS

HGHW

COLLABORATIVE
FUND FOR
HEALTHY GIRLS
HEALTHY WOMEN

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THE NEW GIRLS' MOVEMENT:
IMPLICATIONS
FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

The Ms. Foundation for Women has been creating opportunities for women and girls for almost thirty years.

We conduct advocacy and public education campaigns, and direct resources of all kinds to cutting-edge projects across the country that nurture girls' leadership, protect the health and safety of women and girls, and provide low-income women with the tools to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

Creator of the award-winning Take Our Daughters To Work[®] Day program, the Ms.

Foundation is also a recipient of a Presidential Award for Excellence in Microenterprise Development for our longstanding commitment to improve economic prospects for low-wage women, their families and their communities.

INTRODUCTION

A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR GIRLS' WORK

We don't want to just appear powerful; we want to be powerful,
and we want to be able to prove it.

Lateefah Simon, Executive Director, The Center for Young Women's Development

The Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women set out to document the power of effective girls' and young women's programs in helping girls positively change their lives and communities. The Collaborative Fund, a joint project of the Ms. Foundation, our funding partners, a team of researchers and over a dozen cutting-edge girls' organizations from across the country, asked these dynamic organizations a set of questions. Members of the Collaborative Fund set out to answer these questions together:

- *What makes girls and young women feel safe?*
- *How can youth programs help girls stay strong and grow up to be healthy, powerful women engaged in safeguarding their own well-being as well as the health and vibrancy of their communities?*
- *How can youth programs help girls and young women positively impact their own lives while also working for social change in their communities?*

In answering these questions, we discovered and documented what it means to build and run youth programs that are "true to girls." We also created through the course of the first round of the Collaborative Fund a network of youth organizations that prioritize the needs and strengths of girls and young women. This new network is helping give birth to a new girls' movement that is transforming the fields of youth develop-

ment and youth organizing as well as the communities in which girls live, learn, work and play.

The Ms. Foundation for Women's Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women is a multi-year, highly participatory project designed to redefine and strengthen the field of girls' programming. The Collaborative Fund is a true partnership among researchers, a diversity of funders, and the girls, young women and program staff of its grantee organizations. These partners are working together to identify ways in which girls' programming can build upon girls' inherent strengths, leadership and social change abilities.

The Ms. Foundation launched the first Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women in 1996. In 1997, the Collaborative Fund awarded grants to girls and young women's organizations based on their innovative approaches to the work of enhancing girls' strengths. Most of the programs focus on 9- to 18-year-old girls, although many retain young women to work with program design, development, mentoring and training. Young women run many of the programs and several program directors were under 25 at the time their organizations became part of the Collaborative Fund. A number of the Collaborative Fund programs were start-up, experimental in nature and otherwise seen as "risky investments" by many

grant-making institutions. While some of the girls' programs were based on research about adolescent development and the limited body of work on girls, most were informed by listening to girls talk about their lives. In all of these programs, however, the Collaborative Fund's donor partners recognized a new, collective vision and model for girls' and young women's programming that deserved long-overdue investments of financial and technical resources.

Point of Departure

The Collaborative Fund's 38 foundations and individual donor partners understood that it was not enough just to give money to girls' organizations and hope for the best. It was necessary to invest strategically and substantially in program development as well as in the skills and livelihoods of the women and girls themselves.

The Collaborative Fund featured a participatory learning and evaluation process that has advanced the field of girls' and young women's programming by serving two key functions. First, program staff and girls developed new skills and abilities with which they could transform their ongoing work by being intensively involved in the design and imple-

mentation of the evaluation of their programs. Second, the Collaborative Fund's participatory evaluation process produced findings that are an invaluable resource for the wider fields of youth development and youth organizing as they revise, adapt and grow their work.

This report presents the key findings from this participatory evaluation project and identifies vital indicators and critical components of effective girls' programs. For three years Collaborative Fund partners, including program staff and girls, researchers and donor partners, interacted with and learned from one another about girls and girls' work so that we could offer recommendations on what makes girls' programs effective. The Collaborative Fund is an interactive amalgam of intense listening and learning and trying to understand the world as girls see, experience and shape it.

Process

The Collaborative Fund built in ample opportunity for face-to-face interactions among its partners. The Fund's Learning Team, comprising researchers,

| PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION TRANSFORMS YOUTH PROGRAMS | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p><i>"I want everyone to remember me as the girl who wanted to know everything and who now uses her research skills whenever she wants to understand something better."</i> Sharita Stinson, YWAT member</p> | <p>provides girls and the programs that prioritize them with the analytic and research skills necessary to document their lives and the impact of their organizations. It also provides a model for integrating research practices and findings into program development.</p> | <p>recommended that girls receive training as peer researchers and collect data through interviewing and written and photographic journals to complement the overall research work of the Collaborative Fund. By documenting the experiences of their peers and recording their programs in words and images, YWAT interviews and photojournals helped answer the question: "How do programs positively impact girls' lives?"</p> |
| <p>A central goal of the Collaborative Fund is to validate girls and young women as experts on their own lives and experiences. When girls are approached as the authors of their own lives and trusted as the most qualified shapers of their own programs, girls' insights and strengths prove boundless.</p> | <p>The Collaborative Fund trained two girls from each of the programs that it funded to conduct research using interviews and photojournaling. This group of over 25 young researchers named itself the Young Women's Action Team (YWAT).</p> | <p>YWAT members now report that they self-identify as researchers and value and continue to utilize the critical thinking and analytic skills they learned through the Collaborative Fund.</p> |
| <p>Research on girls' programming that is based on participatory evaluation</p> | <p>YWAT helped develop evaluation protocol for the grantee programs and</p> | |

young women graduate students and Ms. Foundation staff, regularly visited each program site.

In addition, program staff and girls participated in three national convenings and attended regional cluster meetings to exchange ideas and knowledge and to build their individual and organizational capacities for participatory evaluation.

Conducted over a one-year period, the learning and inquiry work was an integral part of the Collaborative Fund. The first phase involved three months of formative design work as well as site visits that actively engaged program staff and girls in developing research questions and program assessment tools. Next, program staff, girls and young women collected data on their programs over a six-month period, followed by three months of data analysis by the Collaborative Fund's Learning Team. In addition to relying on program staff's and girls' participatory evaluation of their own programs, the research team gathered data from grantee reports, interviews with girls and program staff and annual partner meetings.

The Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women is premised on the belief that girls themselves are experts on girls' needs and gifts. By providing girls, young women and program staff with research tools and skills, the Collaborative Fund set out to prove the following core hypothesis:

Effective girl-focused programs build leadership skills, strengthen girls' willingness and capacity to take action on issues that matter to them, and help them develop into strong, healthy women and agents of social change in their communities.

Over the course of three years, the first Collaborative Fund provided knowledge on what constitutes an effective youth program for girls by answering the following key questions:

- How can a program create and maintain safe space for girls within communities and within youth programming?

- How do girls define leadership and how is this definition connected to adult women, family, and culture?
- How can programs and communities support the continuum of development that grows girls into effective agents of social change?

The Collaborative Fund also identified several overarching characteristics of successful girls' programs:

- Girls are respected and involved in program design and leadership,
- Girls' cultures and traditions are acknowledged and foregrounded,
- Girls' families are welcomed into and involved in girls' programs.

The Collaborative Fund used several standard research methods but also developed new evaluation tools to collect data:

- **Ethnographic Observation and Videography** were effectively utilized to describe the context of girls' programs and how girls are involved in them.
- **Program Assessment Tools** were developed to measure specific research questions. These tools include:
 - 1) The Girl Driven Program Index (GDPI);
 - 2) The Voice, Action, Compartment and Opportunity Checklist (VACO); and
 - 3) The Intentional Storytelling Measure (ISM).
- **Girls' Journals and Interviews and Focus Groups with Girls and Parents** captured a wide range of perspectives on girls' programs and how they affect girls' lives.
- **Photojournaling and Interviewing by Girls** told the stories of girls' experiences in their own voices.

The Collaborative Fund's manual on how these research and evaluation tools can be utilized and adapted to other youth programs will form the third publication in our series. This report, describing the findings from the research, is the second publication. The

first publication, *The New Girls' Movement: Charting the Path*, tells the story of the first Collaborative Fund in terms of successes, challenges and lessons learned. We hope that the findings and the materials produced by the first Collaborative Fund will not only strengthen the field of girls and young women's programming but also offer a new, gendered approach to youth

programming as well as a replicable, empowering model of participatory evaluation.

We hope that those of you who develop and implement youth programs as well as those of you who fund and otherwise support youth development and youth organizing find this report useful and adaptable to your work.

NEW PROGRAM ASSESSMENT TOOLS

To measure the power and authenticity of "girls' work"—youth programming that is often cutting-edge, "nontraditional" and reaches girls where they are—the Collaborative Fund created three innovative evaluation tools in order to communicate the exciting importance of this work to others in the fields of youth development and youth organizing:

1 The Girl Driven Program Index (GDPI) determines the degree to which the needs and desires of girls drive a program and identifies the characteristics and assumptions of various program models. The GDPI answers the research question: "How do we define, create and maintain safe space for girls within programs and communities?"

2 VACO captures program staff's observations and participants' self-reports of incremental skill-building that reflects the development of individual and collective leadership.

VACO stands for:

- Voice - girls' ability to speak on their own behalf
- Action - girls' capacity to act on behalf of themselves and others
- Comportment - girls' ability to carry themselves with pride, dignity, and respect
- Opportunity - girls' ability to ask for and access new chances and experiences.

VACO answers the research question: "How do we know that our program develops girls' strengths and leadership?"

3 The Intentional Storytelling Measure (ISM)

gives girls and young women an opportunity to share their knowledge about how to take action in difficult situations that confront them. ISM asks program participants to respond to six different hypothetical scenarios. This measure helps answer the question: "What is the effect on girls and their communities of their involvement in social change work?"


In addition, methodologies like videography and ethnography provided girls' programs with "live" ways to capture activities that do not translate well on paper. They also provided a structured, less obtrusive way to document program activities.

EMPOWERING GIRLS

A GENDERED APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

As the voices of youth struggle to be heard among adults, the voices of girls struggle to be heard even among youth and within youth development and youth organizing.

P. Catlin Fullwood, director of the first Collaborative Fund

ver the past decade, the role of youth in the process of democracy and community-building has moved into the forefront of American and international consciousness. As we embark on our second baby boomer presidency, the focus is shifting from, “What are we going to do about youth?” to “What are youth going to do about us?” How are adults going to relate to and help prepare the next generation that will run the country and lead communities?

For the progressive movement, diverse youth participation and fresh leadership is critical to address effectively intersections of race, class and gender; enable us to move beyond old animosities and schisms; and get on with the work of building and mobilizing new constituencies. Engaging youth in the process of thinking about and initiating social change

takes on particular importance in this context.

Youth development work has gradually moved beyond short-term remedial strategies that attempt to solve young people’s problems “for” them, toward efforts to develop “fully prepared” young people. This concept refers to all youth, not just those identified as “at risk,” and is strength and asset-based in its holistic approach to offering young people services, opportunities and support. This approach also focuses on outcomes that increase employability, social and cultural competency, physical and mental health, personal development, cognitive development and civic interest and involvement. There is a realization of the tremendous need to develop a generation of youth who are prepared to envision, define and create a society in which egalitarianism and equity are the methods by which

democracy is practiced and maintained. For this to happen, all those engaged in youth development (including youth leadership development), youth civic engagement, community development, and organizing for social justice must join forces to share their expertise and create a common base of understanding.

Youth engagement and leadership are key to move forward a vision for safe, healthy and fully realized communities. We further believe that ensuring the full participation of all youth demands that we apply a gender lens to our efforts and place gender at the center of how we view youth development.

Gender-Sensitive Programming

To date, most conventional and new models of youth programs continue to use “universal” programming, which does not distinguish between the needs and

strengths of girls and boys. To be fully effective for girls and boys, the design and operation of a program must consider gender—not in a manner that regards gender differences as innate and unchangeable, but in a way that explores the social construction of gender and invites young women and men to challenge gender norms, examine gender privilege, and create a balance of power between girls and boys.

As we enter the twenty-first century, girls and women have made great progress in the United States. But large segments of girls, across race and class lines, continue to struggle with issues of identity and the trivialization of their leadership abilities. Most of these girls are in coeducational school systems, and often participate in after-school or community-based youth programs that fail to recognize their needs and strengths as girls.

Programs that do turn their attention to girls most often focus on potential problems, working with girls ostensibly “at risk” for teen

WHAT GIRLS NEED FROM YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Create safe space for girls.
- Expand the definition of and ensure girls’ leadership.
- Foster intergenerational relationships between girls and women.
- Respect girls’ cultures and communities.
- Provide girls opportunities for community-building and social change work.

WHAT IS “SOCIAL CHANGE”?

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>We define social change as working to create changes in the attitudes, thinking and practices of individuals and systems. Involving girls in social change requires a shift in the status quo that moves from unquestioning acceptance of the way things are, to develop-</p> | <p>ing an understanding and strategy to engage communities and institutions to address injustice. We believe that we will see real social change only when we recognize the validity of the full continuum of engagement, from community service to direct action. Examples from</p> | <p>the Collaborative Fund along this social change spectrum include river clean-ups that transform a neighborhood, lobbying to make a school curriculum more inclusive of students’ experiences, and organizing to win subsidized bus passes for students.</p> |
|--|--|--|

pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, gang involvement and drug abuse. The Collaborative Fund found that girls, particularly those from communities of color and low-income communities, require more than problem prevention to claim their voice and become community leaders. Programs working with girls must develop new approaches that address girls’ needs for support and connection, view girls as assets, help them come to voice, and offer space for critical thinking.

At a time when organizations and funders are looking for new models of youth leadership and youth engagement, the Collaborative Fund offers the opportunity to reframe thinking about girls’ leadership and roles in bringing about positive social change. The Collaborative Fund’s research, conducted with the participation of program staff and girls, taught us many lessons about creating effective girl-centered programs. We now know that:

- **Safe space is a bottom line issue** in creating an environment in which girls can express themselves. Safe space is more than a place without violence, and can include space to resolve conflict productively.
- **Girls’ leadership takes many forms, and relationships between girls and older women are crucial to the development of leadership skills.** Programs foster leadership in girls through many approaches, including celebrating and reclaiming their cultural traditions and purpose; building individual competencies, skills, and qualities; and developing collective power and movement.
- **Programs support girls’ social change efforts by creating opportunities for girls** to actively represent their communities, engaging girls in critical thinking about issues affecting their lives, and framing *social change as a continuum from community service to direct action.*

This is particularly true for girls disadvantaged by poverty and other obstacles in their lives.

Challenges to Developing Girls’ Leadership in Social Change Work

A number of factors limit the possibilities of girls’ involvement in leadership development and social change. To understand how to include fully the voices and power of all girls—including poor and disenfranchised girls; lesbian, bisexual and transgender girls; girls of color; and immigrant girls—we must understand the social limitations based on gender; or gender and race; or gender, race, class and sexual oppression. Our findings demonstrate that youth programs need to support girls as they negotiate these complex intersections and explicitly address the multiple identities each girl carries with her. The gendered nature of how girls experience race, class and culture means that we must pay particular

attention to girls’ self image and gender stereotyping.

Girls are vulnerable within their communities and ambivalent about the development of their bodies and sexuality. Their ambivalence results from a complex set of factors, including the demeaning representation of women in media and popular culture; dichotomized sexual stereotyping of women as willing victims and provocateurs; and racial and sexual stereotyping of girls as predators or victims.

Gender stereotyping that trivializes girls’ abilities often limits their roles as leaders within their communities. Within a traditional male paradigm of leadership (e.g., leaders are defined as those who speak frequently and authoritatively, and dominate decision-making), girls’ needs or styles may not be valued or recognized. Further, girls often carry additional responsibilities of

caring for younger siblings, caretaking in their homes for working or absent parents, and serving as translators and arbiters for their families vis-à-vis the dominant culture. These obligatory roles for girls and young women are expected and rarely questioned by the larger community. Family and community members rarely value and develop these roles as family leadership opportunities.

We have found that girls’ ability to mitigate these negative or deficit contexts as well as their expressed desire to make their environments safe through their involvement in social change indicates girls’ resiliency. This involvement helps individual girls see themselves as part of a larger group that can make change happen and suits their desires to be a part of something bigger than themselves. These findings are further discussed in the section of this report on social change.

GIRLS, SELF IMAGE AND SAFE SPACE

Our research shows that girls are tremendously ambivalent about their bodies, feeling both delight in their physical selves and betrayal as they receive negative messages and attention from the media and society. Collaborative Fund programs provide a context for girls to analyze how the media and other forces con-

dition them to hate and fear their bodies. Programs also encourage and support positive, reaffirming messages and appreciation of girls’ unique physical and emotional identities.

Girls and young women’s body shapes, sizes and maturity vary widely in their teen years. In several

programs, girls explicitly explore this topic, in particular, the political dimensions of how body size is used to divide women. Together, girls reflect on their sensitivity and comfort or discomfort with their developing bodies. The way they reach out for and lean against each other in repose declares their affec-

tion for one another, and their grace and easy physicality is evidence of their resistance to negative messages. This closeness is one of the characteristics of safe space—a place where girls are able to create a profound sense of intimacy that may not exist in other places in their lives.

KEY INDICATORS FOR EFFECTIVE GIRLS' PROGRAMMING

I feel very secure and I think it's because we're all girls. We all have to deal with the same type of things throughout our lives and day to day.

Young woman participant, Asian and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health

The Collaborative Fund's participatory evaluation process found that effective girls' programs operate within four different spheres of influence: individual, social network, community and institutional. To date, most programs for girls focus at the individual participant level. However, at each of these four levels, girls can acquire skills that make them more confident, assured and better positioned in their worlds. At each level, effective program strategies are facilitated, or frustrated, by the very real boundaries that exist in girls' lives. It is important that programs for girls and young women address these spheres of influence in designing model programs that work best for girls and young women.

The Collaborative Fund supports programs that take a positive approach to girls, are committed to involving girls in real and

meaningful ways in the design and direction of the programs and pay close attention to the roles that culture, family and community plays in the lives of the girls who participate in the programs. The 12 girls' programs supported by the first round of the Collaborative Fund function as social systems in which girls develop skills, learn about themselves, form relationships, and engage in critical thinking and analysis. The programs focus on the development of girl's knowledge, understanding and competencies in ways that are connected to and illustrative of girls' lives and communities. Because these programs are embedded in the cultures and values of girls' communities, there is a direct association between an increase in girls' leadership skills within the program structure and girls learning to be leaders in their communities. Our findings demonstrate that involving girls in program

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

- At the individual level, strategies focus on increasing girls' knowledge and skills, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- At the social network level, strategies aim to create stronger relationships among girls, their families and friends as well as women in the programs and in the community.
- At the community level, girls' programs focus on creating new and broader opportunities for girls and challenging values and belief systems that create negative experiences for girls.
- At the institutional level, strategies focus on social change activities that impact institutional and systemic practices and norms that affect girls and communities.

design and leadership, reclaiming their cultures and traditions, and facilitating family involvement in programs are key indicators of effective girls' programs.

From Rhetoric to Reality: Involving Girls in Program Design and Leadership

Effective girl-focused programs are characterized by girls’ involvement in most aspects of program design and implementation. This ranges from planning activities and events to budgeting and strategic planning to serving as members of Boards of Directors. The process of involving girls must, however, be embedded in the design and philosophy of the program itself so that all girls who enter the program are encouraged and supported to take on leadership roles. This process of engagement is conscious and uses multiple strategies—it is not something that just happens because staff say or decide it is important to involve girls.

Program design and leadership takes many forms, as documented by the Girl Driven Program Index (GDPI). The Collaborative Fund’s Learning Team, including girls and program staff, designed the GDPI as a new program assessment tool to identify the elements of girl-driven programs and to assist in

the evaluation of such programs. The GDPI has two checklists, one for staff and one for girls. The staff-administered checklist measures: girls’ involvement in program activities, program content, learning and teaching methods, the ways in which the program functions in terms of confidences and conflicts with and among girls, and the assumptions upon which the program is based. The checklist used by girls documents from their perspectives the ways girls are involved in programs, the issues that girls do and do not confide in staff, and the ways in which conflict is addressed in the programs.

Girls gain voice and authority in their programs in multiple ways, including program development and implementation; conducting internal and external trainings; sitting on boards; and advocating for their programs in the wider community or school in which it is located. New opportunities for girls’ leadership also arose from their participation in the Collaborative Fund, including their active participation in site

visits and as researchers in assessing program activities and social change in their communities.

Through the process of participatory evaluation, we discovered that girls often consider themselves formal advisors to their programs even when there is no official structure for their involvement. In the eyes of girls, they are in charge. While staff may feel that girls are as involved as possible in programs, girls often see many more opportunities for volunteer or paid staff work, and feel that they can participate further in activities such as strategic planning and fundraising. Both staff and girls agree that it is important to hear from girls and incorporate their agendas and issues into program design and implementation.

Girl-focused programs perpetuate a positive self-fulfilling prophecy: As women believe in girls and create structures for their support and development, girls prosper and thrive. As girls are perceived as stakeholders within these programs and as active agents in their own lives, they grow into full strength and quickly exceed adults’ expectations of them.

Reclaiming Cultures and Traditions

Effective girl-focused programs help girls’ reclaim their cultural traditions and develop girls’ cultural and community identity. They provide girls with a greater sense of who they are and a sense of purpose by making connections to their families and traditions.

| SAMPLE GDPI QUESTION - INDEX FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Check as many as are true for you. In this program, I’ve learned about differences among girls (like race, ethnicity, class, religion) because: | |
| We explore different cultural traditions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We meet different racial and ethnic groups of girls | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I get to spend time with girls who are different from me | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I’ve learned to be more tolerant of others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We all work on issues together | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We talk about our differences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We understand how society works to divide women | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Effective programs build girls' confidence and sense of connection, enabling them to extend safe space into their communities and incorporate cultural values into their development of leadership skills.

Reclaiming tradition is a positive force for girls and a way to create a constructive context for girls' health. Cultural connections also help forge support systems for girls in their families and communities, providing them with skills and language to "walk in multiple worlds." Cultural institutions can also build girls' leadership by helping them negotiate the tensions that can arise between their work in the programs and traditional norms and roles that may discourage girls' agency. Strong programs encourage girls' critical thinking skills and help them challenge the status quo but also embrace the supportive elements of their cultures.

In girl-focused programs, girls learn about culture and tradition in ways that are real to them, rather than as theoretical constructs or rhetorical generalizations that lack relevance for their lives. Areas of inquiry include:

- *The effects of racism and prejudice against different ethnic communities*

At Asian Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health, girls in the HOPE program develop a power analysis that frames racism and gender oppression as robbing people of their power. First-generation

Cambodian girls in the program learn about reproductive health choices and advocate on their own behalf—regain their power—in the American health care system.

- *The impact of society and media on body image*

At Sisters in Action for Power girls have movie nights, showing movies that often feature the latest popular movie about African American people. The girls analyze the ways that their culture and women and girls are portrayed and discuss how this affects the way they view themselves and one another.

- *Sexism and violence against women and girls*

The Center for Anti-Violence Education provides girls with physical and verbal skills to defend themselves. Through this work, girls receive a very clear message about their worth as human beings who deserve to be safe in their homes and communities.

- *Women's history and the history of movements for social justice for their people*

The girls in the Mi Carerra program at the Mi Casa Resource Center for Women meet with women from the community to discuss how Latinos and women are portrayed in popular culture and how that affects the way they as Latinas see themselves in relation to their cultural heritage. When girls learn about their real history they are proud of who they are and what their culture has contributed to the history of the world.

Through activities that explicitly address the intersections of race, class and gender, girls develop new frameworks for understanding the world around them and ways they can challenge and change norms that limit their potential. By using cultural activities to engage girls, programs also build strong community among girls. Group cohesion also reflects the extent to which girls' programs make connections to their cultures and communities. Other findings regarding culture and community include:

- Programs embedded in homogeneous immigrant communities tend to reflect that homogeneity in girls. First generation girls are closely tied to their families and their communities. They play a critical role in translating the new language and environment for their parents, and are often the first line of assimilation into the dominant culture. While they remain deeply rooted in the old, they are torn by their desire to fit into the new.
- Programs with girls from different cultural and racial backgrounds face other challenges. In this case, much of the girl-to-girl relationship building focuses on learning about and respecting each other's cultural differences and addressing and resolving conflicts that keep girls from the potential comfort and strength of their connection with one another.
- Girls in programs embedded in indigenous and rural communities

and other communities beset with economic, political and social problems also feel a strong connection to their communities. They do not necessarily see themselves leaving, but changing the way things are by working from the inside.

- Economics and class issues have a tremendous impact on girls. Class disparities also have a direct impact on parents' ability to participate in girls' lives. Girl-focused programs can allow girls to grow beyond these challenges and for families and communities to develop expanded expectations of girls.
- Culture can be a determining factor in what parents can accept about program activities, even though the cultural context of girls' lives is a primary focus of many programs. Girl-empowering programs often contain elements that some parents may think undermines their culture and authority. Therefore, girls and/or program staff sometimes choose to keep information from parents. These issues create a dynamic tension within programs and between programs and parents. Girls may also feel torn between their cultures and their program and this may become a focus of discussion and resolution within the program.

Facilitating Family Involvement in Programs

Effective girl-focused programs help girls negotiate their multiple roles, cultures and contexts.

Programs frequently serve as a safe place to mediate family traumas or dramas. Girls express a real desire for closeness with women (mothers, aunts, grandmothers) and believe in the importance of men in their families. Their programs often support and celebrate girls' responsibilities to their families and cultures in ways that allow girls to be honored by their parents and families.

Girl-driven programs struggle with parental involvement and parental support for girls' participation. While involving parents and other adults in girls' issues is crucial, the girl-driven nature of the programs can, at times, make it difficult to encourage parents (particularly mothers) to participate in program activities. In addition, the involvement of parents is not neutral and can place the girls in new and complicated relationships with their families and with the programs. Young women report dual commitments to program and family, and their loyalties are often in direct conflict with programs providing knowledge (e.g., reproductive health, sexuality) and promoting principles (e.g., independence, self-determination) that are either discouraged or forbidden within the family setting.

Programs and the girls in them engage families in multiple ways. While girls usually want to work out problems initially with their peers, they also rely on family members (both in and out of their

programs) and other authority figures as a second line of defense. For example, the Collaborative Fund's Intentional Storytelling Measure (ISM), which measures social change work, presents a situational vignette about dating violence in which one girl in group of friends is being battered by her boyfriend. When asked how they would respond, girls said that ideally they would like to help their friend themselves, but that they would rely on parents and the authorities for help.

Programs have the difficult task of advocating for girls' empowerment, while also securing the trust and commitment of girls' families (often to ensure girls' availability to participate) and honoring the loyalty girls feel to their cultural heritage. Some key Collaborative Fund findings include:

- The tension between girls' conflicting desires for independence yet support from their parents creates an organizational ambivalence with which all programs struggle. Balancing girls' need for confidence with parents' need to know how their child is doing is an issue that all of the programs take seriously.
- Girls need the support and approval of their parents in order to develop fully their leadership capabilities. Parental involvement in programs is often problematic, both because of stressors on families and because girls need

their own space. Parents and extended families should have opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate, in formal and informal ways, their daughters' work.

- Girls use their involvement with the programs both to gain approval and to distance themselves from their families.
- Girls are often pulled in a number of directions—by school, family, culture—and may feel compelled to meet expectations that are

antithetical to the empowerment-based behaviors encouraged by their programs.

Many of the girls live in a negative environment outside of their programs. They contend with tremendous amounts of girl-on-girl conflict, a sense of vulnerability in their communities, and tensions within their families. Girl-focused programs help them negotiate the process of maturation and facilitate their connection with family members as they develop leadership skills.

The Collaborative Fund's research found that involving girls in program leadership, valuing their cultures and traditions and involving parents in the girls' programs are key indicators of effective programming for girls and young women. We also found that these indicators greatly complement what we discovered to be the critical components of effective girls' and young women's programs—creating safe space, developing leadership skills and qualities and fostering social change opportunities.

CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE GIRLS PROGRAMMING

SAFE SPACE, LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The Collaborative Fund identified three fundamental characteristics of effective girls' programs: they provide a safe and supportive program environment, they develop girls' leadership skills and qualities, and they provide girls with meaningful opportunities to engage in social change work. Through participatory evaluation, program observation and interviews, the Collaborative Fund identified how programs distill these concepts into their day-to-day operations, and the importance of each component in fostering girls' development into engaged, healthy adults.

CREATING SAFE SPACE

Safe space is not just a room or a place where girls can meet and talk with each other and it is more than just a space safe from violence. Safe space allows girls to resolve their conflicts productively and take on new roles in terms of their friendships with other girls as well as with the institutions and communities with which they interact.

Girls frequently said that they feel safe in programs because of their positive relationships with other girls. Girls also share confidences and feel connected to each other. Staff also contribute to girls' sense of safety by listening to them and demonstrating real concern about their lives.

We use the term "safe space" to describe a certain set of personal and programmatic relationships, activities and interactions. The programs, while unique in design, all share a commitment and ability to create safe space for girls and young women. Our participatory evaluation findings underscore that this quality is an essential element of effective girls' programs. Safe space is girl-affirming and encourages girls' strong, healthy development. Safe space also fosters positive relationships among girls, young women and adult women and creates an environment of fun and joy. Programs create safe space also by providing girls with the option of keeping their secrets—no one demands disclosure and girls are free to make their own choices.

In safe space, staff and girls assess their needs together and staff respond to girls' needs with respect and understanding. Staff and girls jointly develop programs based on what they learn together. It is from this place of security that girls begin to re-envision themselves and engage their families, institutions

CREATING SAFE SPACE IS A "BOTTOM LINE" ISSUE

Safe space is perhaps the most crucial element of positive girls' programming. The participatory evaluation shows that safe space happens when girls:

- Have opportunities to participate in program leadership;
- Develop and nurture positive relationships with other girls;
- Learn about and respect each others' cultural differences;
- Develop trusting relationships with staff;
- Feel that programs value the importance of fun and joy in their lives;
- Learn skills that apply to their lives.

and communities in new and transforming ways. Key elements of how this safe space is created and how it impacts on girls' lives follow.

Safe Space Enables Positive Relationships Among Girls and Young Women

Girls have a complex set of relationships with other girls and young women ranging from extreme interdependence to extreme conflict. Girls' joy in being with each other is often tenuous, or has to be continually maintained, because the larger context of school and culture pits girls against each other. Girls are constantly pulled into mistrust of one another and fear of betrayal. Girls struggle not to feel the pain of this disconnection, as evidenced by phrases such as, "I don't care," and "It doesn't bother me," that echo in their conversations. However our findings indicate that these attitudes as well as girls' capacity to be aggressive with and challenge one another mask a deep concern with and desire to overcome girl-on-girl conflict. This emerged repeatedly as an issue for girls in the programs.

Instead of attempting to resolve conflict by demanding certain behavior of girls, program staff consciously engage girls in addressing and analyzing girl-on-girl conflict. Safe space allows girls to address the social and political roots of interpersonal conflicts and develop new models to understand relationships. Programs also give girls the space to risk being vulnerable and honest in relationships with each

other and with adult women. This requires a high level of trust among the girls and among the girls and staff. Staff build this trust by developing a sense of shared responsibility for the programs and engaging girls as serious partners. By taking the risk to ask girls what they want and motivating them to initiate ideas, program staff create a situation in which they and the girls are mutually accountable. Other findings and observations include:

External Conflicts

- Many young women talk about different areas of conflict, such as feeling disconnected from family networks, girl-on-girl conflict and school rivalries, and about the positive role that being part of a group plays in helping them negotiate conflict.

Accountability

- Girls holding each other accountable to their shared goals, and staff insisting that girls execute their plans, are key to the success of positive girls' programs. Through accountability, girls develop a sense of responsibility to one another, giving them the space to focus on school, family and community.
- Girls feel safe because the system of accountability within their programs will not allow fights, conflicts or any form of violence among them to go unchecked.

Conflict Resolution

- Girls want and need strong, positive relationships with other

girls and tools with which to negotiate the socially constructed pressures that turn them against one another. They ask for skills to forge relationships that allow them to grow individually and collectively.

- Girls are very motivated to protect one another and strongly believe in their ability to do so. They are resourceful in problem-solving and managing conflict in one another's lives.
- Collaborative Fund findings reveal different perspectives among staff and girls about how to handle conflict in the programs. For example, staff believe that they can deal with conflict on a case-by-case basis using policies to guide their decisions. Girls see conflict policies as unequivocal statements of how things are supposed to be. This points to the difficulty of addressing girl-on-girl conflict. While both staff and girls acknowledge that their programs have policies and processes for handling conflict, they differ in their articulation of what those policies and processes are.
- Staff and girls agree that team building and discussion groups help girls come to know and trust each other. Girls feel that programs help them analyze why girls fight and who benefits from them being against each other, while also teaching them to control their anger and to treat

each other with respect. This analysis promotes the understanding that being able to work together is more important than the differences that divide girls.

Safe Space Facilitates and Enhances Intergenerational Relationships

Our findings show that the most important partnerships for girls were with women in the program and in the community. Girls need and want mentoring relationships with older girls and women that offer them accessible role models to emulate and learn from. Safe space created within the program allows girls to engage and develop positive, intergenerational relationships with program staff and with family members.

Girls and Staff

Girls say that their connection to women is the most important element in creating and sustaining safe space. They highly value someone who will listen and hold their confidences, and someone who will always be there when they seek help.

Findings from the participatory evaluation indicate that confidentiality between staff and participants is extremely important. While girls discuss with program staff issues from school to sexuality, they still keep a majority of their confidences to themselves. This demonstrates that safe space and trust do not require full disclosure. Rather girls know they can confide in staff without pressure to reveal or dis-

cuss more than they are comfortable sharing. Positive programs encourage girls to share their experiences and respect their secrets.

Girls, Mothers and Mentors

Intergenerational relationships are key in nurturing girls' leadership and activism and for developing girls as community assets. The difficulties involved in creating durable mentoring relationships, and the ways girls and their mothers struggle to connect and separate, compelled us to reflect on the importance and complexity of these relationships. Findings include:

- Though difficult to maintain, intergenerational relationships are determining factors in creating safe space for girls within programs and within communities.
- Intergenerational relationships play an important role in developing girls' ability to respond to gender and race oppression in ways that are constructive and lead to social change.
- Girls' relationships with adult women positively affect the challenges of acculturation and assimilation.

At Native Action, girls are encouraged to forge relationships with elders. In exchange for running errands and providing help with meals, the elders tell girls stories about the Northern Cheyenne people and the power of their culture. This history provided in the safe context of program, adult

mentors and community, gives girls pride in their culture and fuels their desires to build better lives for their people.

Safe Space Is Filled with Fun and Joy

"In my program, people try to make sure that we have a good time. Having fun with other girls is an important part of my program because it makes me feel safe. In my program, we play games to build trust. They are a really important way to begin to trust staff and other girls."

Teresa Sadler,
young woman participant,
Girls' Resiliency Program

GIRLS SEE THEMSELVES IN POSITIVE TERMS

Girls value and characterize themselves in positive terms and are most confident at ages 12 and 18. At these ages, girls demonstrate the highest self-reported and staff-observed leadership qualities, and score highest for empathy and having a sense of responsibility to resolve their problems.

Many youth programs use entertainment and fun activities to attract and retain participants. Such activities may be seen, at times, as auxiliary to the main program. The Collaborative Fund findings, however, underscore that fun and joy are crucial program elements for girls, facilitating their resilience in an often hostile world and helping them celebrate their hopes, dreams and the power of their "girlness."

This sense of joy pervades the work of programs, especially their work to help each girl recognize her own worth. Girls and staff are able to analyze the negative societal messages that girls receive in a safe space that allows them to make mistakes, to see the humor in difficult situations and to learn from each other. As a result, girls consciously resist oppression by refusing to become victims and revel in their power to name and critique the negative forces in their lives.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND QUALITIES

Leadership in Collaborative Fund programs has many faces, and girls demonstrate their leadership skills in several ways: in their interactions in the program; in their relationships with their families and elders in the community; in their demonstrations and protests in public settings; and through the courage and joy they bring to the business of living.

Girls describe themselves as powerful and positive, and assume leadership roles in programs that support their involvement. They portray themselves as driving an agenda that they have determined in collaboration with adult women—with the women running to keep up with them. Girls also describe their family support as a primary factor in their leadership development.

Elements of Girls' Leadership

To understand how girls develop and demonstrate leadership quali-

ties, the Collaborative Fund's Learning Team worked with girls and program staff to identify the primary indicators of girls' leadership. We found four major elements: voice, action, comportment and opportunity (VACO).

Voice is the most fundamental leadership skill developed by girls in programs. Girls demonstrate voice most frequently by putting forward ideas and suggestions, expressing feelings verbally, actively participating in group discussions and using new vocabulary. Participants' use of voice within program activities increases with time spent in the program.

Action is an illustration of leadership and refers to girls' ability to use their voices to act on behalf of others. Girls take action by giving another girl positive feedback and caring for others. Over time, participants also demonstrate action by suggesting changes in program activities, organizing others to engage in activities and encouraging and supporting another girl to do something difficult. Activism in girls is characterized by the devel-

opment of critical analysis skills, creating organizing and advocacy opportunities and developing reciprocity and accountability among girls and staff.

Comportment is girls' ability to carry themselves with pride, respect and dignity—and to offer the same respect to others. Comportment differs from voice and action in that it relies on visual rather than verbal behaviors. Girls display comportment by paying attention to facilitators, showing respect for other girls and listening to peers in the group. Over time, participants also demonstrate comportment by looking at others directly, dressing and presenting themselves with pride, standing straight or attentively and possessing greater body image confidence.

Opportunity refers to girls' ability to ask for and take advantage of new chances and experiences. Girls illustrate opportunity by following through on responsibilities and volunteering to do something new or challenging. Over time, girls also demonstrate opportunity by asking for more

| SAMPLE VACO QUESTIONS—OPPORTUNITY CHECKLIST FOR STAFF | |
|---|--|
| Have Girls: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Asked to have more responsibility? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Volunteered to do something that is new or challenging? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Suggested ways to find more resources? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Asked about going on a trip or being involved in a special program activity? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Showed independence in taking on something new? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Followed through on responsibility? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: |

responsibility, showing initiative, leading the group when staff is away, videotaping activities and reaching out to guests.

Girls and program staff measured these attributes at three intervals during a six-month period using the VACO assessment tool. Initially, girls rated themselves high in all four areas. During the second and third ratings, however, the scores often went down, positively indicating that the girls appeared to become more reflective and self-critical. Providing a positive framework for reflection and articulating the qualities of leadership is integral to girls' development. Program staff report that having this tool is very useful in reflecting on how girls change as a result of their program.

A Gendered Analysis of Leadership

Girls and young women in the Collaborative Fund programs are always encouraged to develop their leadership qualities and skills—but first they must define what leadership means for them. Girls defined leadership as:

- Being powerful, strong and passionate;
- Speaking up for yourself, while taking care of and advocating for those who can't;
- Listening to others and having respect, both for self and others;
- Being honest, trustworthy, compassionate and responsible;
- Knowing when you should not follow someone, and being able to detect insincerity;

LEADERSHIP IN GIRLS IS FOSTERED BY:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participating in program development, organizational development and governance; ■ Applying skills learned in the program in community and institutional settings; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speaking out against injustice, engaging in critical thinking, developing creative solutions and problem solving; ■ Mentoring and peer recruitment and development. |
|---|--|

- Being able to be wrong or not know everything, and having humility and flexibility;
- Communicating effectively and motivating people;
- Possessing organizing and management skills (both internal and external to group);
- Being willing to take risks;
- Serving as a role model.

In girls' definitions of leadership, we discover the diversity of their leadership styles. Girls and program staff know that leadership is about much more than the traditional model of being first, strongest and most vocal. Rather, girls and program staff present a gendered analysis of leadership—not as taking charge, but as a fluid process with ups and downs. Through visits with programs and national convenings with girls and staff, we identified six types of leadership:

- *Cascading leadership* occurs when women or older girls act as a supporter and role model for younger girls, and the younger girls do the same for even younger girls.
- *Collective leadership* stresses the power of the group to effect change.

■ *Survival leadership* is built on skills that enable girls to negotiate adversity and survive negative societal conditions. These skills are translated into girls' involvement in building strong organizations and new lives.

■ *Roving leadership* is based on the belief that leadership is grasped intermittently and leaders emerge for a specified situation or period of time.

■ *Cultural leadership* utilizes reclaimed cultural values and customs to provide a context through which girls negotiate the world.

■ *Organic leadership* emerges from a girl's natural life experience. It is often cultivated through the group members' need for one another.

Evaluation findings indicate that multiple forms of leadership are present in any given group. This is why effective programs create an environment that fosters and encourages multiple forms of girls' participation.

Program Leadership Development Typologies
Developing and supporting a

diversity of leadership styles and approaches is another critical component of girl-driven programs. The 12 Collaborative Fund programs consciously develop girls' leadership and support girls as leaders in their schools, families and communities. The evaluation research identified different program approaches to support leadership, all of which are embedded within and driven by the cultural context of girls' lives. While some programs identified strongly with a single approach, most programs shared elements across the three approaches.

■ *Leadership through Voice and Culture:* This approach focuses on building girls' ability to use their voices in celebrating and reclaiming their role as women and as members of a culture with tradition and purpose. Girls learn about themselves and their communities in relation to the dominant culture and about the importance of their positive contribution to their communities.

Native Action in Lame Deer, Montana, goes back to cultural roots to reclaim the leadership traditions of women tribal leaders. The girls and young women are motivated by the many role models they have in their own culture and community. The impact of this work was celebrated recently as Geri Small, former director of the girls' program, was elected leader of her Northern Cheyenne tribe. She is the first woman to hold this position.

■ *Leadership through Social Change:* This strategy for leadership

development focuses on the collective power and movement of the group. Girls learn how to build community through program and organizational development and by taking direct action to achieve community change.

The young women from the Laotian Organizing Project at the Asia Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) work on direct action campaigns that take them through a step-by-step process of identifying and prioritizing problems impacting their community, and planning and implementing strategies for proactive institutional solutions. They participated in a community campaign led by the West County Toxics Coalition and Communities for a Better Environment to shut down a local Chevron incinerator. They have gained a strong reputation within their schools and community as an organized force fighting for environmental and social justice.

■ *Leadership through Traditional Achievement:* This approach fosters leadership development by building individual girls' competencies, skills and qualities so they can advance in the world. Girls learn how to negotiate with institutions (e.g., the education system) to ensure their own success and to contribute to their family and community.

Research for Action is a non-profit organization engaged in educational reform and research. Their program, Sisters Together in Action Research (STAR), provides the context for girls to have strong relationships with the

school system, by focusing on enhancing grades, literacy skills and other cognitive and analytical skills. These relationships enabled the girls to organize to change the reading curriculum in their schools to better reflect their own lives and communities.

Many programs combine elements of the three leadership development typologies. Their activities improve communication skills, offer girls opportunities outside their programs and communities, and teach group dynamics. They also develop girls' ability to stand up for themselves and others, avoid violence, speak powerfully, train others and facilitate meetings, plan their own program activities, conduct research, and participate in meetings with adults.

The Center for Young Women's Development is a grassroots organization run by young women of color from low-income communities. Young women involved in San Francisco street economies are hired to design and implement program that train participants to leave the juvenile justice system, and learn the life and job skills necessary to secure legal employment. These young women are isolated from their families, marginalized by systems of education, and excluded from mainstream employment. Through the program, they move from being victims of their circumstances to being power employed citizens.

The Girls' Resiliency Program works with teen women in rural Appalachia to identify their own strengths, become active

decision-makers in their own lives, and advocate for social change. Girls and young women participate in the program at every level, from activities that help them rediscover their voices, to outings designed to develop their relationships with other girls and women, to serving on the Board of Directors.

Mi Casa Resource Center for Women provides quality employment and education programs that promote self-sufficiency for Latino women and youth from low-income communities. The Mi Carera program works with girls to assist them in the development of their minds, bodies and spirits and to build upon their individual strengths within the context of their Latino culture and history.

Collaborative Fund programs realize that there is a powerful interaction between developing girls' personal leadership growth and encouraging them to be active change agents in the institutions and communities that shape their day-to-day lives. Programs play an integral role in providing a safe space for girls and young women to thrive and opportunities for leadership development and

growth so that institutions and communities can best benefit from the social activism of girls and young women. By fostering and preserving the safe space girls need to become leaders and connecting this to the complex process of social change, these programs have developed a new way of thinking about the relationship between girls and community.

FOSTERING SOCIAL CHANGE

We define social change as working to create changes in attitudes and thinking that result in changes in the behaviors and practices of individuals and systems. Social change requires a shift in the status quo, eliminating the unquestioning acceptance of the way things are, leading to an understanding of how to make positive social change happen. Often, girls are expected to accept rules in school that may not make sense, are not relevant to them, or that exclude them from particular activities because they are girls. In a social change model, girls do not have to accept this inequality. Rather, they have the support base

and skills necessary to analyze the situation, form alliances, make a case and attempt to change the rules. This type of change requires an investment in the leadership and advancement of those affected by inequities and a commitment to making things better in the context of the greater good. Taking responsibility for injustice requires critical thinking skills, the willingness to take risks and the ability to turn outrage into social consciousness and action.

Girls respond to personal injustice and societal injustice in emotional ways—at times through anger (turned inward or against those closest to them), discouragement or alienation. Girl-driven programs provide an opportunity and framework for discussing acts of injustice. This often involves unpacking the issue and understanding it as it relates to individual girls, girls as a group, women in general, poor women in particular, communities in general and poor communities in particular. Girls can choose and are supported by their programs to take action on issues they identify as

RESEARCH FOR ACTION/STAR

Girls in the Sisters Together in Action Research (STAR) program chose Omar Tyree's *Fly Girl* as their reading material for their spring book club, only to be told by the principal of their middle school that they could not use that book. The principal felt that the book was not appropriate for 8th grade girls. The STAR girls decided that this book "spoke" to them and provided fertile ground for discussing what their lives were about. They requested a meeting with the

principal and, after much preparation and rehearsal, took their case to her office. Because they were so eloquent and persuasive, *Fly Girl* was added to their reading lists, and copies were distributed for girls who then participated in a series of lively and thoughtful discussions about the lives of urban girls of color. Because of this victory, STAR girls carried themselves with more confidence and took their leadership roles very seriously.

YOUNG WOMEN'S PROJECT

The leaders of Teen Women in Action go to Wilson Senior High School in Washington, DC, every week to conduct innovative activities that build connections and group identities among girls and provide a safe space within the school environment for them to talk about what is bother-

ing them. For example, problem-solving skills are illustrated with a "problem tree" that shows the different parts of a problem—the root, the trunk (which is the part that causes pain and anxiety) and the branches (which represent other emotions and opportunities for understanding).

The girl participants engage in critical thinking with their Teen Leader to break down their problems and to figure out how to turn them into opportunities. Through this cascading leadership, the group bonds and participants move into leadership roles as facilitators.

important, bolstering their leadership qualities and skills.

Activism Is a Critical Element of Girls' Struggle for Identity and Recognition

For girls, activism provides an opportunity for effective leadership and helps establish positive identity, which leads to girls' healthy development and, ultimately, to social change. In the words of one girl who participated in the Collaborative Fund through After School Action Programs/Girl World in Illinois:

"I've learned how to communicate better with people, to speak up more, and to be a leader. I've learned to say what I need to say and learned how to organize."

Encouraging and creating opportunities for activism help girls see themselves as agents of change in their communities. Girls want most of all to be seen as community assets, as giving to the community in ways that are perceived as help-

ful, positive and "good." For girls, the road to social change seems to involve a step that is community service-based.

Programs help girls develop as social change agents by:

- Presenting and working with girls as assets;
- Creating opportunities for girls to represent their communities and programs;
- Engaging girls in critical thinking about issues that affect their lives;
- Framing social change as a continuum from community service to direct action, and from short-term to long-term systemic change.

A girl at Asian and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health had an experience with a male teacher who was denigrating and disrespectful to her and her work with the program.

The girls in the program, in collaboration with their male peers, set up a meeting to talk to the principal of the school about the interaction and the attitude of some teachers toward girls.

As a result, the program developed a sexual harassment survey campaign to find out more about girls' experiences in the school, and school policies were changed.

From Community Service to Direct Action

Girls in all of the Collaborative Fund programs articulated their need for community approval and affirmation in program after program, which led us to explore more carefully the continuum of social change from community service to direct action.

We identified different types of social change work that girls are engaged in through their programs. In their responses to questions in the Intentional Storytelling Measure (ISM) about how they would go about making change in their communities, four types of social change activities were evident and sometimes overlapped. Most programs utilize community service, community outreach, organizing and activism. Programs work with a range of activities, from identifying injustice to teaching the grassroots skills necessary to make lasting social change.

Girls provide thoughtful and passionate leadership to social change work and when girls work in concert with adults and boys in equitable relationships, they provide a new model for positive community change. To build the capacity of programs and communities, it is essential that girls have the opportunity to break out of gender and cultural

stereotypes that inhibit their ability to achieve full status in their communities.

To change how girls are seen and to enable girls' involvement in social change work, programs and girl participants often have to negotiate the different roles that girls play within their cultural contexts and adapt to the multiple cultures and values that girls are engaged in. Some programs present girls as representatives of their communities or soften the perceived threat of girls' activism, and the challenges it may present to traditional cultural expectations by framing their work as community service.

Girls as Community Assets

Advocacy for and by girls within the community and the institutions that influence their lives is critical. The Collaborative Fund found that

SISTERS IN ACTION FOR POWER

When girls and staff from Sisters in Action for Power began to hear stories about how youth could not go to school because they could not afford the bus fare, they went door to door in their neighborhood to talk to community members about what this meant for their children. They also gave testimony at a public hearing before the transit authority on how these fares were affecting poor families' lives. Their multi-phased strategy of organizing the community was successful in gaining subsidized bus passes for low-income youth to use to get to school.

girls want to and can effectively speak on their own behalf. However, they often need help in countering the tremendous negative images and pressures that exist to keep them silent and isolated. For girls to see themselves, and to be seen by others, as agents for social change or as members of a civil society, they must be allowed to develop their skills and sense of efficacy within safe environments and in a framework that positions them as assets to the community. The role of effective girls' programs is to help them gain access and provide opportunities for them to understand the societal inequities they face in ways that lead to action rather than self-destruction.

Programs often serve as the bridge between individual girls and the community. Programs exhibit a constant awareness of reframing and renaming who girls are to themselves and to their communities. Presenting girls as assets gives girls themselves, their families and their communities a very different image of girls than is typically reflected in the world around them. This results in positive self-image for girls and a growing confidence among family and community members in the girls' ability to be effective. Girls not only learn academic, professional and social skills, but also come to understand who they are and how to realize their own potential.

Programs realize that it is necessary to frame social justice in terms that make it real for girls and young women based on their

CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

We let girls know that even if you're young and on the street, been in the juvie system or street economy—you have rights and possibilities. - Lateefah Simon

The Center for Young Women's Development takes their message to the young women on the streets of the Tenderloin District in San Francisco, engaging them in education about HIV and protecting themselves, and helping them see that they can turn their survival skills into leadership skills. Young women in the program learn how to get out, and stay out, of the juvenile justice system, and learn the life and job skills necessary to acquire and sustain legal employment. Many acquire the skills and tools needed to run an organization like the Center for Young Women's Development.

everyday experiences. Staff support girls' development and provide them with ways of understanding and negotiating the conflicts in their lives by helping them develop skills in critical analysis, and through explicit instruction and informal discussion. This provides a crucial first step to developing a political analysis that leads to action. Women in the programs provide girls with a cultural, political and historical framework for processing their lives and experiences, helping girls move beyond the personal to a broader understanding of girls in society.

Barriers to Social Change Work

The difficulty girls face in expressing their power in their families and

schools without being punished or undermined emerged as a recurring theme from both girls and program staff. Even though girls develop tremendous leadership skills within their programs, their application of this empowerment and agency to other systems in which girls and their families feel powerless is limited.

Girls of all ages in the program report differential treatment in school, sports and home because of their gender. Findings and observations include:

- Almost all of the girls experience gender inequalities around them. While younger girls tend to speak about their experiences being treated differently from boys, older girls are more likely to articulate discrimination against women by critiquing the existing power structure. This ability to articulate an analysis of how and why things happen is a central part of the leadership development that happens in Collaborative Fund programs as girls both receive instruction and model positive behavior of the women staff.

- When speaking about barriers, the majority of the girls expressed an understanding that their economic situation will affect their goals to attend college. In addition, girls recognize that their ethnic or racial background will make their goals harder to achieve. Interestingly, few girls mentioned their gender as obstacles to their goals. Although they are aware of how sexism limits opportunity, they refuse to accept that it will keep them from their goals. Their involvement in programs helps them feel powerful because they are part of something bigger than themselves.

- Even when girls recognize the hostile environment around them, this does not prevent them from feeling that they can move ahead in their lives. Girls find strength despite hardship and remain optimistic about life.

Nearly 90 percent of girls in the Collaborative Fund programs consider going to college a priority in the future. Although most of the girls tend to focus on their personal development and dreams, not everyone is individually oriented

when planning for her future. Some girls demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to their families and communities. For instance, one girl considers providing “a solid structure for her family” as her goal for the future. Another girl wants to “take care of her parents and make them proud.” A few young women are also committed to helping others and making changes in the world by running a homeless shelter or working with young women and children.

The girls and young women see themselves as being agents of social change, and have a sense of control over their lives. Their ideas about how to make change happen often reflect what they have learned in their programs. In some programs, young women’s ability to be agents of change is grounded in their cultural or ethnic heritage. Their sense of possibility frequently emerges from being reconnected to their heritage, which they have reclaimed as a result of the program activities. Girls’ realization they are part of a family, a program, a community and a culture strengthens them.

CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS TOWARD PROGRAMS THAT WORK FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

After three intensive years of working with girls, young women and practitioners on program development and participatory evaluation, we have learned a great deal about the tremendous joys and particular challenges of developing programs that genuinely support girls' development into active, healthy, engaged members of their communities. Many have been discussed in this report. As the fields of youth programming take the next steps forward to create effective programming we believe it is essential to keep in mind the vital ingredients of positive programs for girls. These include staying true to girls, making access and participation easy and building sustainable programs.

In considering next steps, we also raise questions regarding the translation of these findings into the wider field of youth programming. While the first round of the Collaborative Fund focused largely on girls' programming in girl-only settings, we believe that many of the lessons we learned are applicable to mixed-gender settings. Throughout our work, questions have emerged about the dynamic interplay between genders and

across lines of race and class. In the spirit of fostering a creative dialogue among youth practitioners and funders, we include this discussion of next steps.

CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICE

Staying True to Girls

We know that youth programs have the difficult task of advocating for girls' empowerment while also securing the trust and commitment of families and community. They must identify strategies for staying true to girls while ensuring that girls can continue to participate and that the adults in their lives are actively engaged in supporting girls and young women. Because effective programs are designed to engage girls and young women at four different levels—individual, social network, community and institutional—mechanisms to build these connections must be in place. Activities like involving family members and older women in the community in cultural activities and in the translation of traditions are often effective mechanisms. Asking girls to develop ways to engage their families can also ensure that their needs are met in

shaping this key component of youth programming.

Making Access and Participation Easy

Very basic issues such as getting paid for the work they do, the program's physical space and transportation to and from program activities profoundly affect girls' participation in programs. Girls see financial recognition of their work as an indication of the value of their presence and contribution and for some girls financial compensation is a practical necessity for their involvement in youth programs. Girls are also more likely to return to a program with an inviting physical space. Living far away from where program activities take place can also preclude girls' involvement if support with transportation is not offered.

Building Sustainable Programs

Youth programs often address complex and challenging issues in girls' lives without adequate support and infrastructure. In fact, two Collaborative Fund grantee programs did not make it through their second year of funding because of organizational instabilities that were exacerbated by trying to run activities that called for

more structure and support than they could handle. The 12 programs that remained in the first round of the Collaborative Fund are powerful examples of what can be accomplished when girls are given voice in the design and implementation of programs. Nonetheless, these programs also continue to struggle with basic issues of fundraising, leadership transition, board development and other challenges to institutional development. Work with girls' programs must emphasize organizational and staff development along with a commitment to true engagement of girls.

Girl-Centered Questions to Guide Future Youth Work

While the impact of the Collaborative Fund programs on girls and their communities and families is quite significant, it remains limited to a small sphere of influence. Most girls continue to be served in mixed-gender programs that seldom prioritize girls' needs or foreground girls' talents. In order to build strong, safe communities in which all youth are valued and protected and that support strong conscientious youth who can participate fully in the civic, social and economic life of our society we must engage in effective youth programming that takes gender into

account. This means we need to continue our practice and our learning in both single and mixed-gender programs.

In order to link the lessons learned from working with girls to the larger fields of youth development and youth organizing and to take a gendered approach, we need to answer some critical questions:

- What is the impact of applying a larger frame of youth civic engagement and youth development to girls' work? What do girls gain and what do they lose? What is gained and what is lost for mixed-gender programs?
- What are some of the inherent challenges in co-ed approaches to working with young people and how do these challenges particularly affect girls?
- What is the distinction between the types of leadership girls manifest in effective girl-centered programs versus the qualities and characteristics traditionally described in youth development and youth civic engagement models?
- How do we ensure the full participation of girls and boys, and young women and young men, in the process of building strong communities?

■ What role do gender, race and class play in determining girls' participation and leadership in youth development and youth civic engagement programs?

■ How does meaningful involvement by girls and young women affect boys and young men?

■ How do we foster egalitarian relationships between genders, among the races, and among youth of different economic and social strata?

More work is needed to understand what fosters and sustains social activism among girls and boys and how we can support this work in single and mixed-gender settings. This will be work undertaken by the Collaborative Fund's second round.

In order to create the most effective environments for girls, boys, young women and young men to thrive, grow and lead, the Ms. Foundation for Women will continue to explore these questions and welcomes partnerships in these areas. Disseminating the lessons learned regarding girls and young women's programming is a key step in this effort. Our collective challenge is to develop organizations and design programs that serve all young people at their strengths.

ATTACHMENT

EFFECTIVE MODELS OF GIRLS' AND YOUNG WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

AFTER SCHOOL ACTION PROGRAMS/GIRL WORLD

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Mission and Purpose

Girl World is a programming and organizing initiative that targets girls in the Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods of Chicago. Girl World is a part of After School Action Programs (ASAP), which is a part of a larger agency called Alternatives. The overarching agency's mission is to develop and provide services for youth and their families that facilitate personal development, strengthen family relationships, and enhance the community's well-being. Within this structure, ASAP encourages and fosters collaboration among its members—tenant associations, congregations, ethnic associations and non-profits—and strengthens the capacity of member organizations to provide strong and consistent programming to youth in Uptown and Edgewater.

Girls are at the heart of Girl World. The work is shaped by the belief that the voices of girls are most critical in creating and shaping opportunities for girls. Girl World builds relationships, teaches life and leadership skills and encourages communities to get involved in gender-specific opportunities for girls.

Key Accomplishments

Girl World's key accomplishments over the past three years include:

- Creating a girls' resource pool to help seed and support new programs for girls in the neighborhood; the girl grant-makers have given away \$13,942 in three years;
- Coordinating monthly meetings for youth workers from the ASAP member organizations who work with girls, providing a space to find support and resources;
- Partnering with the Collaborative Fund to develop research tools that evaluate the impact of girl-driven programs;
- Through a committee of girls, developing a girl-run leadership council through which girls create their own agendas, run their own meetings, plan and run a community graduation for others, participate in community service projects and raise money;
- Cultivating over 50 adult women volunteers a year to work with girls;
- Influencing the culture of the ASAP network to encourage organizations to develop their own girl initiatives;
- Developing, maintaining and nurturing strong relationships

with girls so that they continue to participate in and lead Girl World as they enter adulthood;

- Creating opportunities for 200 girls yearly that include sports, mentoring, arts and crafts, career exploration and developing leadership skills.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

Among Girl World's future plans is to continue working with the girls that have been with the program since their elementary/junior high school days and to develop an initiative based on their ideas about life after high school, community leadership and teen issues. Girl World is also excited about a community strategic planning process that will steer its direction for the next two years.

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ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Mission and Purpose

The Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) was founded in 1993 to unify and empower Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) communities throughout the United States to achieve environmental and social justice. APEN initiated the Laotian Organizing Project (LOP) as the organization's first direct organizing initiative. LOP is committed to improving the quality of life of the Laotian community and others by building a democratic grassroots organization; developing pro-active solutions to problems in the community and confronting key decision-makers around issues that affect low-income residents in the area. The organization focuses its work in west Contra Costa County, California, a region that encompasses some of the most toxic neighborhoods in the country and is home to approximately 10,000 Laotian residents.

In response to the dire lack of opportunities for young women in this community and in keeping with its goal to build an organization in which all sectors of the community participate equally, LOP began the Youth Initiative in 1995. The aim of the Youth Initiative is to develop the

leadership and organizing capacity of Laotian young women. Youth Initiative's overall goals are: 1) to strengthen the Laotian community in west Contra Costa County through the development of leadership among girls and young women and 2) to build a model for youth organizing in the broader API community.

Key Accomplishments

Since 1995, Youth Initiative participants have significantly impacted their community. They visibly participated in a community campaign led by the West County Toxics Coalition and Communities for a Better Environment to shut down a local Chevron incinerator. They worked with Californians for Justice, another Ms. Foundation grantee, to defeat California's statewide anti-affirmative action initiative and the initiative to ban bilingual education in Contra Costa County. In addition, the young women involved in the Youth Initiative developed and won a campaign to improve their school's environment by increasing counseling resources. The girls have gained a strong reputation within the school and community as an organized force fighting for environmental and social justice.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

Working on direct action campaigns takes participants step-by-step through a process of identifying and prioritizing problems impacting their community and planning and implementing strategies to develop pro-active, institutional solutions. In the coming years, the Youth Initiative will develop a cycle of campaign planning, implementation and evaluation that 1) builds leadership among individuals, 2) creates real structural change in the community and 3) raises youth consciousness about what it takes to impact the root causes of the problems their community faces. Their work on the local level has created a model for social change work led by young women that can be applied in similar communities nationwide.

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ASIANS & PACIFIC ISLANDERS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Mission and Purpose

HOPE (Health, Opportunities, Problem-Solving and Empowerment) for Girls, a project of Asians and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health (APIRH), works to foster leadership among young, low-income, Asian and Pacific Islander women, building their capacity to be agents of social change. Through popular education, action research and community organizing, HOPE empowers young women to advocate and organize for institutional change that positively impacts the health and well-being of low-income immigrant and refugee communities across California. HOPE members learn how to make connections between health, education, reproductive freedom and poverty. They also learn how to connect their personal experiences to larger political and social issues such as racism, patriarchy, classism and sexism. Through HOPE, Asian Pacific Islander young women build upon their strengths and experiences to become leaders of social change for their communities. APIRH's long-term vision is that HOPE will become a sustainable and community-owned and community-led force for social change.

Key Accomplishments

In the past three years, HOPE Long Beach has trained more than 35 young Cambodian women as community leaders, organizers and advocates. In 1998, HOPE launched a School Safety Campaign to address the high incidence of sexual harassment in Long Beach schools. As part of the campaign, HOPE members developed a 10-page survey on sexual harassment and distributed it to more than 400 young women at Polytechnic High School, Long Beach's largest high school. The study revealed that 82 percent of women surveyed experience sexual harassment from their peers, teachers and/or administrators at the school. Furthermore, of the total number of students surveyed, one in two reported that sexual harassment negatively impacts their ability to learn. In June 2000, HOPE members presented their survey findings at a community forum attended by over 200 students, community leaders and school officials. HOPE members also made policy recommendations to school officials. In the wake of the survey, Polytechnic High School has insti-

tuted a significant campaign to end sexual harassment at the school. Other schools in the Long Beach Unified School District are planning similar changes.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

APIRH prioritizes developing its members' leadership and participation in all levels of the program, from program planning and design to program evaluation. In addition, through collaborative work with sister HOPE projects in Oakland and Richmond, California, and other organizations dedicated to social and economic justice, HOPE Long Beach aims to effect statewide and national change that benefits the reproductive health and overall well-being of low-income women and girls of color.

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CENTER FOR ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Mission and Purpose

Founded in 1974, the Center for Anti-Violence Education (CAE) educates and organizes to end violence against women and children. CAE is a multi-racial feminist organization with a commitment to fighting racism and heterosexism. CAE teaches girls and young women violence prevention, self-defense and martial arts, and offers a supportive environment for survivors of violence to heal their bodies and spirits and to regain a sense of control over their lives. Through discussions and projects, CAE places the violence we experience as individuals in a broader social and political context. CAE also initiates social and political activities for women, teen women, children, and their families.

Key Accomplishments

Through a three-year project (1996-99) with Girls Inc., CAE developed the Action for Safety™ curriculum, a national program for violence prevention for girls, and is now training staff from dozens of Girls Inc. affiliates. This year alone, more than 500 girls at more than 20 sites across the

U.S. will participate in the program. The organization also successfully launched the Teen Women's Initiative, which elicited an enthusiastic response from young women participating in the various components of the program. The need for this project has been clear, given the epidemic of violence against women and teen women and the complex developmental issues faced by teen girls in society. But the project's developers did not envision how the young women would take CAE's vision and run with it—creating paths for their own participation that arise from their strengths and meet their needs.

Participation in the Collaborative Fund has helped CAE see the importance of integrating program participants into the evaluation process—not only in terms of giving feedback but also gathering and analyzing data. As CAE's Youth Program Coordinator explains, "The Ms. Collaborative Fund has definitely helped us move to a totally new and exciting place as an organization with intergenerational community and leadership."

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

CAE is working to develop the (tentatively named) Institute for Staff and Program Development to help organizations create and implement anti-violence programs. The Institute will enhance the life-affirming, life-saving effects of CAE's programs. As one young woman put it: "This was an amazing and empowering experience. I feel like my self-esteem has jumped 10 spaces higher than when I started. Please continue to do this for young women." As a lead organization in the progressive anti-violence movement, CAE has helped various groups replicate its programs. Now CAE is working to expand and institutionalize this important aspect of its work and change the face of programming for girls and young women—locally and nationally.

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CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Mission and Purpose

The Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) is a grassroots organization run completely by low-income young women of color who have themselves progressed through CYWD's programs. These young women—all under the age of 24—are hired to design and implement all of CYWD's activities in conjunction with a network of coordinating agencies. Young women in the program learn not only how to get out of and stay out of the juvenile justice system, but also the life and job skills necessary to acquire and sustain legal employment. They also gain the skills and tools needed to run the agency. These young, poor women who are isolated from their families, marginalized by systems of education and excluded from mainstream employment move from being victims of their circumstances to being powerful, employed citizens working to enhance their community.

Key Accomplishments

CYWD recruits all of its staff

members directly from the streets and from locked juvenile detention facilities. The young women work up to 20 hours per week and are paid a living wage so they can begin to focus on their development rather than scraping up money for rent, childcare and other expenses. CYWD conducts numerous programs to help young women—those incarcerated or on the street—think critically about the criminal and juvenile justice systems and their participation in them. These young women also identify goals and objectives for themselves—including earning a high school diploma and going to college—and organize and advocate for systemic equity. Using donated computers and technical support, CYWD has developed an on-site TECH-UP computer lab that is open five days per week to provide young women (both employees and street contacts) with a positive youth-led space to access computers and learn about the digital world. Finally, the Nelly Velasco Project, named after a late co-worker and coordinated by a 16-

year-old African American lesbian, brings queer young women of color to participate in weekly recreational and educational events.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

CYWD is in a powerful position to meet the complex, multifaceted needs of its community. The young women in CYWD learn not only how to get out and stay out of the juvenile justice system, but also the life and job skills necessary to acquire and sustain legal employment. Recently, CYWD initiated a campaign to ensure that San Francisco County provides adequate services and care for girls, young women and queer youth who are wards of the system.

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COOL GIRLS, INC.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Mission and Purpose

Cool Girls, Inc., is dedicated to the self-empowerment of girls in low-income communities. Cool Girls provides tools to help girls make positive choices to achieve academic success, break the cycles of teen pregnancy and poverty and overcome the barriers of racism and sexism.

Key Accomplishments

In just three years, Cool Girls, Inc., has grown from serving 100 girls in two elementary school sites to serving 265 girls in four elementary sites and one middle school site. Cool Girls has significantly expanded its programs, including the Cool Girls mentoring program. Working with the Ms. Foundation model, Cool Girls conducted a comprehensive, qualitative evaluation of its programs using measures such as focus

groups, journaling, and photo-journaling. During the 1999-2000 school year, Cool Girls also worked in conjunction with Georgia State University's Department of Psychology to conduct an in-depth program evaluation to better understand the effect of its after-school programs on the girls served. The research showed a significant positive effect on participating girls in a number of areas, including a considerable impact in nutrition knowledge, knowledge of sexual development and a delay in the onset of drug experimentation. And 100 percent of Cool Girls knew that women have the same job skills that men do, reflecting increased knowledge of career opportunities for women.

In addition, Cool Girls has introduced a new program, Cool Tech, which serves 25 girls ages 10 through 12 in Saturday quarterly

sessions focusing on technology, communications, money management, career development and leadership skills.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

In the future, Cool Girls will continue to increase service to young girls in Atlanta's low-income communities by following more girls from elementary schools into middle schools, involving more girls at the middle school level and expanding to serve a more diverse population of girls.

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GIRLS' RESILIENCY PROGRAM

LINCOLN COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

Mission and Purpose

The Girls' Resiliency Program (GRP), a project of the Appalachian Women's Leadership Project, Inc., works with teen women in rural Appalachia so they can identify their strengths, become active decision-makers in their own lives and advocate for social change. GRP works with girls and young women who are overlooked by others in the community: the girl on probation, the girl with experience using drugs, the girl who sees no hope for her future, the girl whose daily struggle is to survive. Girls' Resiliency develops the natural skills and leadership they each possess. Girls and young women participate in the program at every level, from activities that help them rediscover their voices, to outings designed to help them develop relationships with other girls/young women, to holding leadership positions within the organization as Board Members or Research Interns.

Key Accomplishments

In the past three years, the program and its staff have, with the girls, been personally and organizationally transformed. It has grown from being a small, new project within an organization to being an independent organization with its own 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. GRP began by helping girls trust themselves enough to read aloud a poem they wrote; recently the program produced both a book of original poems and a CD with original songs. The program started with one staff member and now has more than a dozen, including the girls and young women who have worked as Research Interns. With them, the program undertook an intensive program evaluation project to help identify strengths. Through this evaluation, the program developed language through which to communicate these strengths to others.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

The Girls' Resiliency Program has several long-term goals for the girls in its program: 1) Girls' leadership will grow, as evidenced by their voicing their opinions, their involvement in local decision-making groups, and their community service and social change work; 2) Girls will demonstrate significant increases in their healthy behavior/choices; 3) Community attitudes regarding high-risk girls/young women will improve; and 4) Families of girl participants will be strengthened and will be perceived by girls as supportive.

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MI CASA RESOURCE CENTER FOR WOMEN

DENVER, COLORADO

Mission and Purpose

The mission of Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, Inc., is to provide quality employment and education programs that promote self-sufficiency for primarily low-income, Latino women and youth. One of the programs of Mi Casa is Mi Carrera (My Career). It aims to offer culturally relevant workshops and activities that nurture the minds, bodies and spirits of young women and build upon their individual strengths. Mi Carrera was initiated in 1979 as a four-year dropout prevention program for low-income girls attending West High School. Its dual goals are to reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of young Latinas who go on to college. Mi Carrera's main focus is to assist young women in the development of their minds, bodies and spirits. Participants are able to look closely at themselves and create a plan to make their lives healthy and happy.

The young women who come to Mi Casa drive Mi Carrera's ideas and beliefs. The program values young women and promotes their inner growth.

Key Accomplishments

The program serves 75 participants throughout the year, offering educational, cultural and recreational opportunities to enhance girls' and young women's minds, bodies and spirits:

- 70 young girls/women either continued to the next grade or graduated;
- 7 young women graduated from high school;
- 5 young women went to college;
- 12 young women participated in Take Our Daughters to Work® Day;
- 1 peer trainer was hired;
- All participants received email accounts;
- Along with two other organizations, 20 young women organized and celebrated Dia

de los Muertos with approximately 140 families and community members.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

Mi Casa will continue to work with young women and girls to build their leadership skills by offering challenging opportunities in a safe environment that is culturally competent. The program hopes to work in the field of civic activism as a means of developing leadership, which includes the strengthening of skills such as decision making, team work, critical thinking and oral and written language.

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NATIVE ACTION

LAME DEER, MONTANA

Mission and Purpose

Founded in 1984 and located on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Native Action is nationally recognized as a model for citizen empowerment. The Seven Cheyenne Stars and Hope Project, which focuses on elders passing on cultural knowledge and tradition to girls, is the first comprehensive program for Cheyenne girls. The program builds on the successful efforts of young women on the Reservation who helped develop tribal laws against child sexual abuse and who established the first local high school on the Reservation. Native Action and the Cheyenne Stars project are built upon Cheyenne beliefs and teachings that a strong cultural identity is critical to self-esteem and that good self-esteem leads to leadership. The mission of the Cheyenne Stars is to gain both academic and cultural education.

Key Accomplishments

The Seven Cheyenne Stars and Hope Project builds and nurtures the Cheyenne sense of community and culture into every activity, which is complemented with mainstream training and skills building. This grounding provides girls with healthy self-esteem (owning their Cheyenne identity) and a strong sense of their ability as community leaders. The girls learn the values of cooperation and trust from their elders and use this knowledge to work with organizations outside the reservation. Over the past three years, the participants have adopted a highway to learn the meaning of interdependence with nature and have developed one-on-one relationships with elders to learn the values of the culture. They also engaged in team and leadership-building activities, which were focused on acquiring knowledge and skills such as strategic planning, critical thinking, public speaking, social and cultural awareness, relationship building and net-

working. This knowledge was put into practice at the 1999 Youth and Family Sisterhood Gathering, organized by the girls on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

The girls will continue to own their Cheyenne identity and receive support from the elders in their community. Northern Cheyenne culture and its unique orientation towards wholeness will continue to guide the work. The girls in the programs have been made aware of their own power and have been empowered as future women leaders. They know the value of building and maintaining strong and healthy communities.

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RESEARCH FOR ACTION

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Mission and Purpose

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based non-profit organization engaged in educational research and reform. RFA was founded in 1992 by a group of women committed to connecting their work in educational research to their social activism. RFA works with educators, students, parents and community members to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. One of RFA's programs is Sisters Together in Action Research (STAR). Empowering girls through literacy and leadership development, STAR is an after-school program located in four low-income schools (elementary through high school) in the School District of Philadelphia. STAR provides a safe space for girls to learn traditional qualitative research methods while developing their voices through reflection and sharing of issues they identify that impact their social, cultural and educational lives. STAR is based

on the belief that experiences contributing to effective action and leadership fuel both a sense of efficacy and girls' belief in their collective power to make change.

Key Accomplishments

STAR began three years ago at two middle schools and has expanded to the high school and the elementary school levels. More than 120 girls, young women and adult facilitators meet at four sites after school each week. STAR program participants have responded to the inclusive nature of the STAR program and the participatory evaluation research work with the Collaborative Fund found that "good girls and bad—they can all become STAR girls. But once they do, there is a certain behavior expected of them, a certain standard that must be upheld. It's not about dress or money, but it is about comportment—how the girls conduct and carry themselves in the world is dictated by being a STAR girl."

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

STAR has a number of goals:

- to help girls develop lifetime strategies of critical analysis and problem solving;
- to engage STAR participants in leading youth outreach work that fosters the concepts of action research, literacy growth and empowerment;
- to impact girls' personal career trajectories as they make changes in their schools and communities;
- to publish girls' work and continue to use technology and additional communication tools to educate potential supporters of girls' programming.

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SISTERS IN ACTION FOR POWER

PORTLAND, OREGON

Mission and Purpose

Sisters in Action for Power is a five-year-old grassroots membership organization that is community-based, intergenerational and multi-racial. The organization promotes gender and race equity, and works with low-income girls and girls of color to develop their leadership and capacity to respond to the needs and issues of their communities.

Sisters in Action for Power's mission is to empower low-income girls and girls of color ages 11 to 19 to take leadership in their communities; to work intergenerationally with low-income women and women of color to fight for progressive social change; and to develop community-driven campaigns to address social and economic injustice. Its model combines direct service, grassroots leadership development, political education and community organizing. Young women have been a priority to best ensure the full participation and leadership of girls. Girls under 18 were recruited first in the organization's base-building efforts. This has allowed girls to assert themselves, come into their voice and authority as leaders and shape the culture of

the organization. Girls become empowered as leaders in the organization, in mixed-age circles of women and girls, in their peer groups and in their community.

Key Accomplishments

Sisters in Action for Power has positively affected the local Portland debate on gender violence and safety, and, more recently, the pressing issue of affordable and equitable public transportation. Sisters in Action for Power has achieved many successes, including:

- Training more than 600 young women and girls through a multi-cultural defense program, including developing 15 low-income young women as trainers;
- Prompting the school district to create and implement a district-wide tracking and reporting system for incidents of sexual harassment;
- Prompting Multnomah County to pass the first resolution to include gender violence in all violence prevention programs;
- Initiating community awareness about obstacles for students getting to and from school, resulting in more than 16 news articles in the local media profiling Sisters in Action for Power's organizing efforts;

- Instituting a pilot project that allows student who are eligible for free and reduced lunch to obtain free bus passes for this school year.

Future Goals for Girls and Young Women's Work

Sisters in Action for Power wants to continue building a permanent institution of change, specifically a girls-driven grassroots organization with low-income people, youth, women and people of color who can develop, articulate and model a new progressive vision. Sisters in Action strongly believes this can be done through the political development of grassroots leaders, by challenging institutions through collective action, and by providing leaders with the necessary skills and tools to effectively change the culture in their communities. Organizing is the organization's strategy for achieving these goals.

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THE YOUNG WOMEN'S PROJECT

WASHINGTON, DC

Mission and Purpose

The Young Women's Project (YWP) is a multi-cultural organization that builds and supports teen women and girl leaders so they can improve their own lives and transform their communities. Through a structured program of training, information, skills, tools and knowledge, YWP takes young women through a growth process to realize and develop their own power, trust and support each other, and use their skills and knowledge to create projects that strengthen the broader community. Current programs are concentrated in the Anacostia, Shaw, and Columbia Heights neighborhoods of Washington, DC.

Key Accomplishments

YWP programs focus on teen women and girls who are under-resourced (lack economic resources, family support, opportunities) and teens of color. In just one year, these programs reached six public schools, two clinics, and several community organizations, serving more than 100 teen women, girls, and young mothers. The teens trained reached 500 more youth through their projects.

The Teen Women in Action (TWA) project gives teen women tools and opportunities to change their lives and communities through skills/issues training, conducting a community assessment, designing and implementing a community project, and, ultimately, becoming project staff, advisors and volunteers. TWA has trained more than 500 DC teens, produced a 400-page training curriculum, matched 50 teens with young women mentors and facilitated teen-led projects on teen pregnancy, body image, mental health and family violence.

The Teen-Led Projects reach hundreds of girls in DC schools and organizations and involve them in projects that build and change institutions. Issues and skills training has focused on stress and mental health, family violence, reproductive health and pregnancy prevention, oppression, parenting, nutrition and pregnancy and body image. The Campaign to Improve Foster Care and Group Homes is working to improve access and quality of life for teen women in the foster care system by enforcing and/or creating new residential group home regulations, conducting leadership-self advocacy workshops, and increasing foster teen

involvement in group home governance. Since June 1999, YWP has conducted interviews with teens in group homes and group home staff, completed workshops at more than six group homes, hired three group home youth, built a network of supporters inside and outside the DC foster care system, and made personal contacts with 40 group home teens. YWP has also built alliances in the City Council, the Mayor's Office and Child and Family Services.

Future Goals for Girls' and Young Women's Work

YWP is expanding its Teen-Led Projects into issue campaigns that can directly bring about meaningful change. The organization is also building systems for monitoring and evaluating its work, with the goal of sharing what it learns with other youth workers.

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Girls and young women are not on the verge of crisis, but are making positive change in the world around them. What the Ms. Foundation learned during the first round of the Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women is that girls who experience leadership and social change opportunities in their communities retain their natural strength and vitality, helping them grow into strong and vital women. We knew that if we supported organizations that provided girls with the tools to build on their strengths, we would be promoting a unique model of girls' development as well as building a field of positive girls' and young women's programming.

The Ms. Foundation for Women's Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women brings together national and local foundations, and individuals to support diverse community-based organizations that utilize leadership develop-

ment and social activism training to enable girls and young women to influence and change the way community institutions impact their lives and their communities. Organizations supported by the Collaborative Fund work on the premise that girls are assets to their communities, and that given a role in their own development, practical skills and strong adult role models, they will thrive, grow and lead, even surpassing our own expectations. To do this work, Collaborative Fund partners look for groups that give genuine leadership to girls and young women, and involve them in the design of programs. This means that girls and young women attend meetings along with our other partners, and make key decisions regarding the direction of our work.

The Collaborative Fund model is a unique national partnership that includes funders; the girls, young women and program staff of the local organizations that we

fund; and researchers. The first round of the Collaborative Fund leveraged over \$4 million to support local girl-serving organizations. The Ms. Foundation is about to launch a second round that will focus on how youth can be supported as social change agents and how that can happen in single-gender and mixed-gender settings.

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- Young Women's Project, Washington, DC

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- Asians & Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health, Long Beach, CA
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- Center for Young Women's Development, San Francisco, CA
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- Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, Inc., Denver, CO
- Native Action, Lame Deer, MT
- Research for Action/STAR, Philadelphia, PA

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Ms. Foundation for Women
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