

# AGALI

Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative



**2012 FINAL REPORT**

**The Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative** improves adolescent girls' health, education, and livelihoods in Africa and Latin America. AGALI empowers leaders and organizations to advocate for girl-friendly laws, policies, and funding in Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, and Ethiopia. Through capacity building workshops, seed grant funding, and technical assistance, AGALI has created a global movement of leaders and organizations advocating for girls.



AGALI's impacts include the passage and implementation of national laws, policies, and programs that protect girls from violence, increase their access to education, health services, and economic opportunities, and empower young women to develop their own solutions to the obstacles they face. AGALI Fellows and their institutions have provided direct training and services to over 40,000 adolescent girls and their allies, in addition to engaging 600 grassroots organizations in girl-centered advocacy efforts.

*AGALI is a program of the Public Health Institute, based in Oakland, California.*

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2009, the **Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI)** has improved the health, education, livelihoods, and rights of adolescent girls in Africa and Latin America. AGALI has transformed the lives of adolescent girls by strengthening the capacity of leaders and organizations to advocate for improved laws, funding, and programs in Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, and Ethiopia.

AGALI has strengthened the ability of national leaders and institutions to advocate for adolescent girls' social, economic, and health needs, while enhancing young women's ability to develop their own solutions to the challenges they face. The AGALI program's multi-faceted approach includes intensive capacity building workshops, grant funding, technical assistance, institutional strengthening, a structured outreach and dissemination process, and multi-media strategies to build the advocacy field. AGALI's comprehensive model advances the efforts of the United Nations' country programs to promote adolescent girls' human rights, health, education, and livelihoods in UN priority focus countries.

AGALI has created a global network of 89 Fellows and organizations advocating for adolescent girls, and funded 40 innovative advocacy strategies to transform the policy, programmatic, and budgetary landscapes for adolescent girls. AGALI advocacy initiatives have successfully expanded access to health services and education for adolescent girls, and reduced the prevalence of child marriage, violence, and other harmful traditional practices. AGALI has achieved dozens of national legal reforms, local policy wins, and budgetary increases for adolescent girls' programs, in addition to empowering girls to advocate for themselves.

**AGALI FELLOW PROFILES CAN  
BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE:**

[www.agaliprogram.org/fellows/](http://www.agaliprogram.org/fellows/)

## II. GOAL & OBJECTIVES FOR 2012

The goal of the **Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative** is to advance the human rights, health, education, and livelihoods of adolescent girls by strengthening the capacity of civil society leaders to advocate for the programs, policies, and funding needed to improve girls' lives. Leveraging the successes and lessons learned from AGALI since 2009, PHI continues to build a network of Global South leaders advocating for the rights of adolescent girls in existing focus countries. AGALI's primary objectives during 2012 have been to:

- 1) Strengthen the capacity of 18 civil society leaders and their institutions in Liberia** to advocate for policies, programs and funding to advance the health, education, human rights, and livelihoods of adolescent girls. Program work in 2012 included an intensive national workshop that enabled Liberian leaders to learn diverse strategies to respond to girls' needs, create their own advocacy strategies on behalf of adolescent girls, identify key actors and other local resources to enhance their success, and establish process and outcome measures to evaluate their impacts.
- 2) Expand the advocacy efforts of participants and their institutions** by providing Fellows with technical assistance for the development of new advocacy proposals. AGALI also awarded four seed grants to the organizations in Liberia that demonstrated the greatest potential to advocate for policies, programs, and funding that improve adolescent girls' lives.
- 3) Support AGALI's fourteen new and renewal grantees in Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, and Ethiopia** through ongoing technical assistance, site visits, and support in seeking further funding to sustain their ongoing advocacy strategies. AGALI also continued to support the advocacy work of AGANET, the Malawi Adolescent Girls' Advocacy Network, which was established by AGALI Fellows and staff in 2011. Organizations that received grants from AGALI were also eligible to apply for Technical Assistance (TA) funds, \$1500 small grants that support organizational capacity building in specific advocacy areas, including media and communications, strategy development, and community mobilization.



4) **Build broader knowledge and engagement in advocacy efforts for adolescent girls** by supporting participants' dissemination and outreach activities and increasing public awareness about girls' realities. In the five focus countries, AGALI continued to support AGALI graduates' efforts to conduct their own training workshops to both strengthen the capacity of girls to advocate for themselves and to engage grassroots organizations as allies advocating for girls' issues. AGALI also continued to develop and disseminate policy briefs on laws and policies affecting adolescent girls in Malawi and Liberia, in addition to using mixed media approaches to communicate the needs of adolescent girls to broader audiences around the world.

5) **Sustain existing AGALI activities and lay the groundwork to implement new AGALI programming for 2013**, including ongoing engagement with AGALI graduates, program promotion, and the recruitment of new cohorts of AGALI Fellows.



*AGALI 2010 Liberia Fellow Kula Fofana with AGALI Lead Facilitator Grace Kaimila-Kanjo at the 2012 AGALI Liberia Training in Monrovia*

### III. 2012 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### ADVOCACY SUCCESSES

AGALI enables grantee organizations to improve the legal and policy frameworks that protect adolescent girls' rights in their countries. In 2012, AGALI grantees in Liberia, Malawi, Guatemala and Honduras celebrated dozens of advocacy and policy successes, from grassroots empowerment of adolescent girl advocates to the approval of new national laws and policies that improve girls' health, education, and security.

#### Liberia

Since 2010, AGALI has sustained the pioneering advocacy of civil society organizations Helping Our People Excel (HOPE) and Touching Humanity In Need of Kindness (THINK). Building on their successful advocacy for passage of the national Children's Law in 2011, AGALI funded HOPE and THINK to ensure the thorough implementation of the new law. With support from AGALI, the organizations celebrated the following successes in 2012:

- **Official launch of the Children's Law.** In January 2012, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf officially launched the Children's Law, a groundbreaking piece of legislation that provides comprehensive protections for children's rights, with a specific focus on the unique needs of girls. The launch brought together children from around the country, government officials, and representatives from local and international organizations to celebrate the passage of this landmark legislation.
- **National roll-out of the Children's Law.** This series of events in all 15 counties of Liberia raised community awareness about the Law and the need to protect girls' rights. HOPE and THINK implemented 23 awareness meetings and community dialogues throughout Liberia.
- **Celebration of the first International Day of the Girl Child.** On October 11, 2012, HOPE, THINK, and other Liberian partners led the celebration of this international milestone for girls. Activities included a march through Monrovia to an event where HOPE provided remarks on behalf of national civil society.

- **Design and dissemination of Children’s Law awareness posters.** To build community awareness and investment in the law, HOPE and THINK printed and distributed over 2,000 posters to communities throughout Liberia. The final design promoted the Community Partnership section of the Children’s Law and encouraged communities to participate in the implementation of the Law.
- **Development of the Girls’ Manifesto.** Twenty-seven adolescent girls participated in a workshop hosted by HOPE and THINK, where they developed the “Manifesto for the Development and Empowerment of the Girl Child.” The Manifesto was written and signed by participating girls and presented at a one-day Consultative Dialogue on Ending Child Marriage held by the Ministry of Gender and Development. The Manifesto will serve as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool for HOPE and THINK’s advocacy in 2013. (Please see Attachment A: Girls Manifesto - THINK and HOPE Liberia.)

## Malawi

In 2012, AGALI supported the ongoing advocacy of seven grantee organizations in Malawi, including the Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CRECCOM), the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Girls’ Empowerment Network (GENET), the Foundation for Community Support Services (FOCUS), the Chilimba Women and Children Support Organisation, Nkotakhota AIDS Support Organization (NASO), and the Centre for Alternatives for Victimized Women and Children (CAVWOK), as well as the AGALI-supported Adolescent Girls’ Advocacy Network (AGANET), which includes 25 member organizations. Highlights of AGALI Malawi grantees’ advocacy successes in 2012 include:

- **Reintroduction of the national Marriage Bill to Parliament.** AGANET advocated for the reintroduction of the national Marriage Bill to increase the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 years in Malawi. Although Parliament delayed the vote, the Bill is now scheduled for a vote in 2013.
- **Ratification of local bylaws prohibiting child marriage.** GENET worked with 22 traditional authorities and village chiefs in Chiradzulo District to develop bylaws that prohibit child marriage and penalize adults who engage in the practice. This new initiative has already transformed local community-based practices around child marriage and garnered widespread international acclaim. (Please see Attachment B: Malawi Press Highlights).
- **Community sensitization on harmful traditional practices.** FOCUS conducted sensitization workshops for over 5200 community members in northern Malawi to increase awareness of the negative effects of the harmful traditional practices prevalent among local tribes, including forced marriage by abduction.
- **Signing an agreement with traditional authorities to address harmful traditional practices.** Led by an AGALI Fellow who is also a village chief, Chilimba developed a network of over 40 chiefs and traditional leaders working to end sexual initiation practices that negatively impact adolescent girls in the Zomba District.
- **Review of the National School Readmission Policy.** CRECCOM and its partner organizations completed revisions to the National School Readmission Policy to improve the policy’s focus on the needs of teen mothers. Thanks to the organization’s comprehensive approach to school readmission of teen mothers, 80% of girls who re-enrolled in school in 2010 remain enrolled at the end of 2012.
- **Media outreach to increase public understanding of adolescent girls’ issues.** To publicize the need to increase the age of marriage to 18 years, DBU and AGANET developed and broadcast five radio spots and three television programs highlighting the urgent challenges facing girls in Malawi.
- **Implementation of a major intersectoral meeting focusing on adolescent girls’ rights.** As part of the advocacy campaign to end child marriage, AGANET organized a national meeting attended by 800 people, including government representatives, traditional authorities, and students, thereby significantly increasing government and public awareness of the need to end child marriage.
- **Official launch of AGANET.** In September, AGANET held its first annual summit, which was attended by 160 delegates from member and partner organizations, 15 members of the media, and seven government representatives, including the Deputy Minister of Education.



*Adolescent girls participating in IDEI activities  
Quetzaltenango, Guatemala*

## Guatemala

Working with partner organizations in Guatemala, AGALI sustained seven national and local advocacy initiatives in 2012. During a challenging period for human rights work in Guatemala, AGALI provided invaluable support to the following partner organizations: the Asociación Concejo Pro-Desarrollo Comunitario (ACPDC), Asociación Generando (ASOGEN), Centro EcuMénico de Integración Pastoral (CEIPA), Asociación Nacional Contra el Maltrato Infantil (CONACMI), Asociación de Investigación, Desarrollo, y Educación Integral (IDEI), and Asociación Frente de Salud Infantil y Reproductiva de Guatemala (FESIRGUA). Highlights from AGALI Guatemala grantees' 2012 work include:

- **Opening of a Center for Women Survivors of Violence.** ASOGEN successfully advocated for approval of the Chimaltenango Department Center for Women Survivors of Violence, with a special focus on the unique needs of adolescent girl victims of violent crime.
- **Establishing of a monitoring committee to protect adolescent girl factory workers' rights.** CONACMI worked with government partners to establish a multi-sectoral monitoring committee that includes adolescent girl representatives advocating for workers' rights. The committee has developed and funded local policies that improve working conditions and also provide formal advocacy and human rights training to adolescent girl factory workers in the community of San Pedro Sacatepéquez.
- **Opening of the Quetzaltenango Executive Secretariat for the Protection of Children and Adolescents.** CEIPA advocated with the municipal government for the opening and staffing of the Secretariat, and worked with government authorities to assure appropriate attention to the needs of girls.
- **Empowerment of adolescent girl advocates.** In the Quetzaltenango Department, both CEIPA and Asociación IDEI provided intensive capacity building and support to marginalized adolescent girls. CEIPA trained 47 adolescent girl workers in advocacy, while Asociación IDEI empowered 40 indigenous girls to participate in advocacy and public policy development at both municipal and national levels.
- **Opening of two Municipal Offices of Women and Youth.** Working in the towns of Patzún and Comalapa in the Chimaltenango District, FESIRGUA successfully advocated for the opening and staffing of municipal offices in indigenous communities that will address the specific needs of adolescent girls.
- **Implementation of a monitoring plan for the national Sexual Violence Protocol for adolescent girl survivors of abuse.** Building on their successful advocacy for approval of the Protocol, CONACMI advocated with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance to develop and approve a national plan to ensure girl-friendly implementation of the Protocol in hospitals throughout Guatemala.
- **Capacity-building of hospital personnel to provide appropriate care to adolescent girls.** CONACMI built the capacity of 37 Hospital Directors and 29 Regional Health Authorities to ensure effective implementation of the national Sexual Violence Protocol throughout Guatemala. CONACMI and its partner organizations also printed and distributed over 26,000 copies of handbooks and communications materials outlining appropriate treatment for adolescent girl survivors of violence.
- **Implementation of girl-friendly local public policies.** Building on their groundbreaking girls' democratic participation model, Asociación IDEI collaborated with local authorities in the towns of Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Siguilá to ensure implementation of the Municipal Public Policy for Integrated Protection of Adolescent Girls, which has been approved in both municipalities through 2015.



## Honduras

AGALI supports the advocacy of Honduras Coalition for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Rights (“the Coalition”). In partnership with grantee organizations Forosida & ASHONPLAFA (the Honduran Family Planning Association), AGALI achieved the following successes in Honduras during 2012:

- **Launch of the National Strategy for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.** The Minister of Health inaugurated a nationwide action plan to improve sex education at home and in schools, and to make health services more accessible to adolescent girls (please see Attachment C: Honduras Press Highlights).
- **Approval of the “Caring for My Life and Health” curriculum guides.** The Vice-Minister of Education endorsed the guides for use in public schools as the official sex education textbook.
- **Direct dialogue with national government decision-makers.** The Coalition met with nine high-level government decision-makers – including the President of Honduras, the Minister of Health, the Minister of the National Youth Institute, and the Vice-Minister of Education (during a period when there was no acting Minister of Education) – about the need for accelerated implementation of the Ministerial Declaration ‘Prevention Through Education’. These meetings played a key role in increasing the government’s commitment to effectively implementing comprehensive sexuality education in Honduras.
- **Approval of the National Youth Policy by the Honduran National Youth Institute.** In August, the National Youth Institute launched the new National Youth Policy for 2012-2020. This policy includes all of the government’s major commitments to youth development and the prioritization of investment in young people, including adolescent girls.
- **Implementation of a national summit for comprehensive sex education.** ASHONPLAFA organized a national summit attended by 16 of 18 Departmental Directors of Education to increase their understanding of the Ministry of Education’s role in ensuring implementation of the Ministerial Declaration.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

Throughout 2012, AGALI strengthened the capacity of AGALI Fellows and alumni through an intensive advocacy workshop in Liberia, four Institutional Strengthening workshops, technical assistance funding, and provision of technical assistance to Fellows and their institutions.

### AGALI Advocacy Workshop

In 2012, AGALI strengthened the ability of 18 new Liberian Fellows to advocate for programs and policies that improve the health, human rights, education, and livelihoods of adolescent girls and young women in their countries. Following an intensive recruitment process that generated over 80 applications and engaged AGALI alumni in the selection process, PHI implemented a national training workshop in Liberia in May, 2012. The national workshop built on a one-day AGALI orientation during which the new Fellows began developing their own political maps that served as the foundation for their advocacy strategies.

### IN THEIR WORDS

*AGALI Fellows provided the following feedback in their written evaluations of the AGALI 2012 Liberia workshop:*

#### Liberia Advocacy Workshop

- 100% of participants reported that the training increased their knowledge of advocacy and the advocacy process.
- 100% of participants agreed that the training increased their knowledge of issues affecting adolescent girls and young women.
- 100% of participants reported that the workshop was a good way for them to learn about advocacy and adolescent girls’ issues.
- 100% of participants strongly agreed that the facilitators and trainers were skilled at communicating and presenting workshop content and topics.



*AGALI 2012 Liberia Fellows on graduation night at the AGALI training*

The national workshop incorporated a range of topics related to advocacy for adolescent girls, including: social, legal, cultural, and religious factors affecting adolescent girls; girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights; strategies to combat harmful traditional practices; political mapping and policy formulation; strategies for media outreach; SWOT analyses; and best practices for ensuring girls' democratic participation. The workshop utilized a guided proposal development process in which AGALI Fellows developed their own advocacy strategies that integrated their knowledge of girls' needs with the strength of their own organizations in order to advance adolescent girls' rights. During the workshop, participants developed draft proposals to solicit funding from AGALI and other funders to implement their advocacy strategies.

In Liberia, AGALI collaborated with Grace Kaimila-Kanjo, an international expert on advocacy for adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, to implement the workshop.

AGALI 2010 Fellows Aisha Cooper Bruce, Rosana Schaack, and Kula Fofana also facilitated key workshop sessions, providing an important local context for the capacity building process. These regional and national experts were a tremendous asset to the Liberian workshop, providing invaluable perspective concerning effective advocacy strategies for girls and sharing their own concrete experiences and lessons learned from years of working in the field. In addition to collaborating with AGALI staff to adapt the program's methodology to Liberia's unique social and political context, these experts continue to serve as a resource to the AGALI alumni as they implement their advocacy strategies.

The new cohort of AGALI Fellows in Liberia have already demonstrated their deep commitment to improving adolescent girls' lives, actively participating in a follow up Institutional Strengthening workshop and becoming engaged members of the global AGALI network.



## Institutional Strengthening

In addition to successfully strengthening the capacity of a new cohort of Liberian Fellows in 2012, AGALI has continued to implement a series of Institutional Strengthening (IS) workshops for AGALI alumni. These IS workshops provide AGALI alumni and key staff of their organizations with the opportunity to network, share advocacy successes and lessons learned, and also build important new advocacy skills in important topics related to girls' rights. In 2012, AGALI conducted four IS workshops in Guatemala, Malawi, Liberia and Honduras. In total, 59 Fellows, key staff from their institutions, and government and UN representatives participated in the 2012 AGALI IS workshops.

In April, AGALI implemented an IS workshop in Honduras to support the advocacy work of the Honduras Coalition for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Rights. To date, the majority of the Coalition's advocacy efforts have focused on implementation of comprehensive sexuality education curriculum within the context of the Ministerial Declaration 'Prevention Through Education'. After consulting with Coalition members concerning what topic would be most strategic to strengthen their advocacy efforts, PHI organized an IS workshop focusing on advocacy for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, led by renowned international sexuality education expert Dr. Pepe Aguilar, executive director of DEMYSEX in Mexico. Held in Tegucigalpa, the workshop brought together 21 participants from Coalition member institutions, including civil society organizations, UN agencies, and government programs. Participants immediately applied what they learned from the workshop to their ongoing advocacy to mainstream use of girl-friendly sex education resources in schools.

To strengthen AGALI Fellows' advocacy efforts in Malawi, PHI selected four Fellows, one local staff member, and one adolescent girl to participate in an intensive digital storytelling workshop in September, led by AGALI Program Administrator Lorena Gomez-Barris. During the workshop, participants learned how to effectively use media and storytelling in their advocacy campaigns, and each created a 2-3 minute digital story video exploring their roles as advocates for girls. Since the workshop, AGALI Fellows and staff have used these digital stories in community forums, advocacy events, and international conferences to highlight the urgent challenges facing girls in Malawi. (Please see Attachment H: AGALI Digital Links.)

In collaboration with regional advocacy expert Dr. Mirna Montenegro, AGALI hosted an IS workshop in Guatemala City in early November. Focusing on direct advocacy with government decision-makers, the experiential workshop brought together AGALI Fellows, staff of their organizations, and government representatives. During the workshop, Dr. Montenegro organized in-person meetings with high-level government representatives, including Mirna de Coro, who in early 2013 became the first woman Vice President of Congress in Guatemala's history.

Based on feedback from new 2012 Liberia Fellows about their need to build their fundraising skills, AGALI hosted a proposal development workshop in Monrovia in December. Facilitator Lancedell Matthews, the Executive Director of the New African Research and Development Agency, led participants through the process of developing a proposal for a girl-focused funding opportunity, and provided individual coaching to strengthen the Liberia Fellows' ability to fundraise successfully. AGALI Fellow Aisha Cooper Bruce also facilitated sessions on social media marketing and donor relationship development.

### Institutional Strengthening Workshops

***AGALI Fellows provided the following feedback in their written evaluations of the AGALI 2012 Liberia workshop:***

- 100% of participants reported that the workshop improved their ability to use concrete tools and skills to do media advocacy (Malawi Digital Storytelling Workshop).
- 100% of participants reported that the workshop significantly improved their understanding of the post-electoral context for adolescent girls' rights (Guatemala IS Workshop).
- 100% of participants reported that the workshop improved their ability to monitor the implementation of the "Prevention Through Education" Ministerial Declaration (Honduras IS Workshop).

## Technical Assistance

To enhance the impact of AGALI Fellows' advocacy strategies and build the capacity of their organizations to effectively advocate for adolescent girls, PHI provided technical assistance and TA funding to Fellows and grantee organizations throughout 2012. During the Liberia advocacy workshop, staff and facilitators provided TA to the AGALI Fellows as they developed their advocacy strategies, and also offered extensive email and phone feedback and TA as the organizations finalized their proposals. Staff members also provided ongoing technical support to the four organizations that received grants.

In late 2011 and early 2012, PHI competitively awarded three TA grants to AGALI partner organizations in Guatemala, Liberia, and Malawi. These small grants enabled grantees to hire expert consultants to strengthen their advocacy strategies. AGALI grantees used this support to train staff on budgetary advocacy, to design an online girls' advocacy forum, and to develop communications materials to increase community understanding of the impact of harmful traditional practices.

Throughout the year, AGALI staff also provided on-demand TA to Fellows from all five focus countries, including collaborative development of media advocacy projects, fundraising support, network development, and connections to relevant resources and opportunities through monthly communication with Fellows and alumni. This ongoing TA helped secure additional funding for grantee advocacy projects, resulted in Fellows' selection for international fellowships and conferences, and enhanced the connection between the program and its four generations of Fellows and alumni.

AGALI staff also enabled alumni to leverage additional funding from other donors. Through TA provided by AGALI staff, the Centre for Liberian Assistance (run by AGALI 2010 Fellow Hawa Bropleh) and Chilimba Women and Children Support Organisation in Malawi (managed by AGALI 2011 Fellow Christopher Mtima) received small grants and in-kind donations from Lantern Projects, a US-based organization that provides funding for community-based international projects. This funding provided important resources for the organizations' direct work with adolescent girls and helped bolster their core services in their respective communities.



*AGALI 2012 Liberia Fellow Janice Pratt  
Monrovia, Liberia*

## 3. Grantmaking

Following the national training workshop in Liberia, AGALI provided technical assistance to all AGALI Fellows who submitted advocacy proposals to help them strengthen their strategies. AGALI competitively awarded a total of \$35,000 in funding to four new partner organizations in Liberia – Aiding Disadvantaged Women and Girls (ADWANGA), Community Empowerment and Sustainable Program (CESP), the Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS), and SaveLives Liberia.

In addition to funding these new advocacy grants, PHI continued to support existing grantees by awarding renewal grants to five organizations in Guatemala, two in Liberia, and two in Malawi, for a total of \$85,000 in renewal funding. PHI staff also provided ongoing technical assistance to renewal grantees.

### **New advocacy projects initiated in Liberia in 2012 include:**

#### **Liberia**

**ADWANGA** is helping adolescent girls break out of poverty by advocating with the district government in Nimba County to fully implement the section of the Girls' Education Policy that mandates provision of safe spaces for girls. Taking a participatory approach to advocacy, ADWANGA is building the capacity of 40 adolescent girls to advocate directly with the District Education Officer.

With the goal of reducing gender-based violence against girls in schools, **CESP** is advocating for implementation of the National Policy on Girls' Education in Liberia. The project is engaging the Ministry of Education to review and standardize its monitoring system, and ensure the implementation of the law in schools.

**CJPS** is addressing the low rates of girls' enrollment and retention in schools in Bong County. CJPS seeks to ensure access to quality education for girls by advocating with the Minister of Education for full implementation of the Girls' Education Policy, focusing on the section aiming to improve girls' entry into and retention in school. This project also trains girls in advocacy so they can recommend revisions to school-level policies for girls' enrollment and retention in Bong County schools.

Aiming to address the high rates of early and forced marriage in rural Liberia, **SaveLives Liberia** is advocating for the reduction of early marriages among adolescent girls in Grand Bassa County. The project advocates with traditional leaders and rural communities to adapt customary norms and practices to conform to national statutory laws protecting girls from forced and early marriage.

### **In addition to these four new projects launched in Liberia in 2012, AGALI provided renewal grants to sustain the following initiatives in Guatemala, Liberia, and Malawi:**

#### **Guatemala**

**Asociación IDEI** refined its unique advocacy model during the third year of its "Democratic Participation of Adolescent Girls in the Development of Comprehensive Public Policies," project. Building on its successes during the first two years of implementation, the project empowers girls and young women to participate in government policy decisions. In coordination with the National Commission on Childhood and Adolescence, IDEI is promoting adolescent girls' development through girls' direct participation in the formulation of girl-friendly public policies. This pioneering project is building the capacity of indigenous girls to engage with the democratic process, and organizing community events and forums with government decision-makers to support the girls' efforts to change local policy. Successes of this initiative to date include passage of new municipal policies developed by girls, and increased government budgetary assignment to support their implementation. Please see Attachment E for a case study highlighting IDEI's advocacy work.

**FESIRGUA** implemented the third phase of its AGALI-supported project, "Adolescent Indigenous Women Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health Policies with Local Political Candidates during the Electoral Process" in 2012. This initiative works with mayors of two largely indigenous Guatemalan highland towns to increase the municipal budget for specialized programs in sexual and reproductive health targeting adolescents and young people, and to create a commission on childhood, adolescence and youth. The project focuses on developing the advocacy skills of rural indigenous women and girls, community outreach to encourage their participation in the project, and direct outreach with decision-makers to improve the SRH of adolescent girls and young people. The project conducted outreach with local candidates during the 2011 elections and successfully advocated for the opening of Municipal Offices of Women and Children in the towns of Patzún and Comalapa in 2012.



**CONACMI** received renewal funding to continue two AGALI-funded advocacy initiatives. The first, “Integrated Attention to Adolescent Survivors of Sexual Violence in Guatemala,” is entering its third year of implementation. Building on the approval of a national Sexual Violence Protocol for adolescent girl survivors of abuse in the project’s first year, CONACMI has continued to push for specialized care for adolescent girls by monitoring the implementation of the Protocol and training medical personnel on the specific needs of adolescent girls. Launched in two major Guatemala City hospitals, CONACMI has leveraged additional funding to expand the project to hospitals throughout the country.

**CONACMI’s** other AGALI-funded project received a second round of funding in 2012. The “Advocating for an Inclusive Agenda and the Comprehensive Protection of Adolescent Girl Factory Workers” project improves the lives of adolescent girls who work in garment factories in and around Guatemala City. The project began with advocacy for the development of an official Agenda for the Protection of Adolescent Factory Workers in the government strategic plan of the town of San Pedro Sacatepequez. When this plan was approved by the government, CONACMI began advocating with local decision-makers and the municipal Office of Women to effectively meet the needs of girls working in garment factories, and built the capacity of the girls themselves to advocate for their needs.

**CEIPA** has been implementing the “Girls and Young Women Workers on the Political Agenda of Municipal Authorities in Quetzaltenango” project since 2011. The organization continues to improve the quality of life of adolescent girl workers by advocating for the implementation of public policies focused on youth protection and development in this region. In 2012, CEIPA expanded its work to rural communities in the Quetzaltenango Department, advocating in collaboration with adolescent girl activists for the creation of Offices of Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents.

**ASOGEN** initiated the “Advocacy for the Opening of the Comprehensive Support Center for Women Survivors of Violence in Chimaltenango” in 2011. The project has successfully advocated for the opening of a support center for women survivors of violence in Chimaltenango, where there are high rates of sexual violence against adolescent girls, very little prosecution of these crimes, or comprehensive treatment available for survivors. Building on the successes of the project’s first year, Asociación Generando is currently advocating with departmental authorities to implement a specialized treatment and counseling protocol for adolescent girl survivors of violence at the center.

### AGALI GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: GENET MALAWI

The Girls Empowerment Network (GENET Malawi) is a non-profit organization based in Blantyre, Malawi that has been an AGALI partner since 2009. GENET was founded in 2008 by a group of young women who saw the need to empower marginalized adolescent girls. In 2010, GENET Communications Director Joyce Chikakuda became an AGALI Fellow. Recognizing the potential to further strengthen GENET’s capacity to advocate for adolescent girls’ rights, AGALI selected the organization’s Executive Director, Faith Phiri, to participate in AGALI’s 2011 cohort. After the 2011 Malawi workshop, AGALI awarded GENET funding to implement an advocacy strategy to reduce child marriage by targeting village chiefs and other traditional authorities in participating communities in Southern Malawi.

At the beginning of the project, GENET produced a short film called *The Story of Florence and Harmful Traditional Practices*, which they used to sensitize traditional authorities and community groups on the impact of child marriage and other harmful traditional practices on girls’ lives. By collaborating with girl advocates and employing innovative media outreach strategies, GENET has convinced chiefs and other traditional leaders to implement strict bylaws prohibiting child marriage. This exciting pilot project has received extensive press coverage in the local and national news, including the Malawi Voice and Voice of America.

While advocating to eliminate child marriage at the local level, GENET has also been instrumental in developing and launching the Malawi Adolescent Girls Advocacy Network (AGANET), a nationwide coalition of civil society institutions collaborating to advocate for girls’ rights. (For more information please see Attachment B: Malawi Press Highlights and Attachment H: AGALI Digital Links *The Story of Florence and Harmful Traditional Practices*.)

## Liberia

Since 2010, AGALI grantees **Helping Our People Excel (HOPE)** and **Touching Humanity In Need of Kindness (THINK)** have been collaborating on the “Advocacy for Passage and Implementation of the Children’s Act” project. HOPE and THINK successfully advocated for the passage of the Children’s Law in 2011, using an innovative approach that included partnership, empowerment of adolescent girl advocates, and direct education with Senators. They are currently advocating for the girl-friendly implementation of sections of the ratified Children’s Law, and building the capacity of girls to monitor the law’s implementation and act as citizen journalists. (Please see Attachment G for a case study of HOPE and THINK’s pioneering advocacy work.)

## Malawi

**GENET** is implementing the second year of the “Stop Child Marriage Project” to reduce the incidence of child marriage among rural adolescent girls in Chiradzulo District. The project is providing families and community leaders with a platform to review and modify customary laws pertaining to child marriage. GENET’s pioneering approach has resulted in the passage of local bylaws prohibiting child marriage, and the implementation of stiff penalties for those who perpetuate the practice. The organization has also been active in developing media advocacy tools to use in the fight against marriage, including a video about harmful traditional practices in Malawi, and an AGALI-produced digital story.

**Chilimba Women and Children Support Organisation** continues to implement the “Tiwale Advocacy Project” to ensure greater access to education for girls. Chilimba promotes the modification of girls’ cultural initiation ceremonies among Traditional Authorities by developing alternatives to harmful sexual cleansing practices in Zomba District. The project, led by an AGALI Fellow who is also a village chief, is advocating with other chiefs and local leaders to modify and develop alternatives to traditional initiation practices that negatively impact adolescent girls.

## ADVOCACY NETWORKS

In addition to supporting a broad range of individual organizations in their efforts to improve adolescent girls’ lives, AGALI provides funding and technical assistance to two formal civil society networks: the Coalition for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Rights (“the Coalition”) in Honduras. These networks enable member institutions to collaboratively advocate for adolescent girls nationally and collectively build public support and government commitment to adolescent girls’ issues.



*Youth participating in the Honduras Coalition’s community awareness campaign*

**The Honduras Advocacy Coalition for Youth Sexual and Reproductive Rights** was founded at an AGALI IS workshop in 2011, with the goal of improving government investment in youth sexual and reproductive health. In 2012, the Coalition advocated for girl-friendly implementation of the Ministerial Declaration “Prevention Through Education,” a regional agreement to improve youth sexual and reproductive health services and education. With AGALI’s ongoing support, the Coalition has grown to include 12 member institutions, conducted sensitization meetings with decision-makers, raised community awareness about the Declaration, collaborated with allies in the media, and strengthened the Coalition’s civil society and youth networks. Advocacy successes in 2012 included accelerated implementation of the Ministerial Declaration, the approval of the National Youth Policy, and the launch of the National Strategy for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.

In March of 2012, AGALI alumni launched the **Adolescent Girls' Advocacy Network (AGANET)** with seed funding from AGALI. Over the past year, AGANET has grown to include 25 member organizations, and has become a leading national voice on adolescent girls' issues, launching a variety of national-level advocacy initiatives to improve adolescent girls' lives by ending child marriage.

In September, AGANET held its first annual summit, which was attended by 160 delegates from member and partner organizations, 15 members of the media, and seven government representatives, including the Deputy Minister of Education. As part of its advocacy campaign to end child marriage, AGANET also organized a national meeting attended by 800 people, including government representatives, traditional authorities, and students, significantly increasing government and public awareness of the need to end child marriage. The summit, national meeting, and AGANET's other advocacy events were widely covered in the national media, and built support among government decision-makers and the general public for improved legal and policy protections for adolescent girls in Malawi.

### **BUILDING A GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY MOVEMENT FOR GIRLS**

AGALI strengthens the capacity of adolescent girls to advocate for themselves and increases the ability of local civil society groups to improve adolescent girls' lives. To build broader advocacy movements for girls in AGALI focus countries, PHI provides Fellows with funding to conduct dissemination workshops for adolescent girls and civil society groups. Since 2009, AGALI Fellows have reached over 40,000 girls through training workshops and programming interventions.

Through a structured dissemination and outreach process, AGALI offers Fellows a stipend to reimburse them for their time, travel, and materials for the workshops they conduct. To receive the honorarium, organization directors must submit a request for a workshop and AGALI Fellows are required to submit a session design, along with written evaluations and sign in sheets to AGALI. These full-day dissemination and outreach workshops have successfully reached more remote and isolated populations in local languages,



*AGANET's National Meeting - September 2012*

sensitizing them to the needs of adolescent girls and engaging them in grassroots advocacy efforts. The outreach workshops conducted with adolescent girls provide an opportunity for largely indigenous youth groups to learn about their own rights and to become involved in AGALI advocacy initiatives.

In 2012, two AGALI Fellows in Guatemala provided 20 dissemination and outreach workshops to groups ranging from students to health workers. Over 260 people participated in these dissemination workshops, principally from indigenous communities in the Sololá and Totonicapán Departments. In Liberia, each of AGALI's 18 new Fellows provided basic advocacy training for staff members of their organizations. In addition, one AGALI Liberia Fellow conducted two weeks of advocacy and girls' rights trainings for five schools in Grand Bassa and Nimba Counties, reaching over 215 adolescent girls and 110 teachers and administrators. A second Liberia Fellow conducted trainings for over 60 students in Margibi County at the Margibi Student Association and the YWCA.

### **MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND STORYTELLING**

Building on AGALI's comprehensive media engagement strategy launched in 2011, PHI expanded its focus on media advocacy throughout 2012. AGALI Fellows and grantee organizations received extensive coverage in the media for their girl-centered advocacy, and AGALI staff used video production and social media engagement to create advocacy tools and showcase AGALI's successes.

*(Continued on page 16)*



## AGALI FELLOWS IN THE NEWS

**AGALI 2010 Liberia Fellow Rosana Schaack** was honored by Vital Voices with a 2012 Human Rights Award for her efforts to end violence against girls and women in Liberia. Rosana and her fellow honorees received their awards in June, in front of a crowd of 2,000 dignitaries and human rights activists at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.



*Rosana (far left) and fellow honorees pose for the Washington Post*



*Danessa and Joany participate in an iLEAP workshop*

**AGALI 2009 Honduras Fellow Joany Garcia and 2011 Guatemala Fellow Danessa Luna** were selected as two of only 12 International Fellows of the 2012 iLEAP Global Leadership program, and traveled to Seattle, Washington for three months of leadership development.

**AGALI 2010 Liberia Fellow Kula Fofana** was recognized as the 2012 Youth Advocate of the Year by the *Liberian Nation* newspaper, in addition to being chosen as both Co-Chairperson of the National Vision Steering Committee Vision 2030 and Director of the Adolescent Girls Unit at the national Ministry of Gender.



*Kula receiving recognition from Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*

## PRESS COVERAGE

AGALI Fellows' advocacy successes received extensive press coverage in 2012. In Malawi, national news outlets including the Malawi Voice newspaper covered GENET's work with traditional authorities. The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and national newspapers and radio highlighted AGANET's efforts to end child marriage. In Central America, over 20 newspaper articles and a variety of television and radio forums featured the work of the Honduras Coalition for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Rights. (Please see Attachment B and C for press highlights.)

AGALI Fellows received individual recognition for their work as well, including Liberia Fellow Rosana Schaack's 2012 Human Rights Award from Vital Voices, which was featured in the Washington Post. In addition, Honduras Fellow Joany Garcia and Guatemala Fellow Danessa Luna's were selected to participate in the prestigious iLEAP International Fellowship. (Please see AGALI Fellows in the News page 18.)



*Joyce Chikakuda writing her story at the September Digital Storytelling Workshop - Lilongwe, Malawi*

## AGALI Videos

AGALI continues to develop videos highlighting the work of Fellows and grantees. AGALI staff produced "From Children's Rights to the Liberia Children's Law: An AGALI Case Study", a 7-minute video that explores how 2009 AGALI Fellows Rosana Schaack and Aisha Cooper Bruce collaborated to advocate for the passage of the Liberian Children's Act. The video explores the law's impacts for adolescent girls, and is being used as an educational tool by AGALI Fellows, and has had multiple screenings around the world. (Please see Attachment H: AGALI Digital Links.)



*Opening photo of adolescent girls in Liberia from the video "From Children's Rights to the Liberia Children's Law: An AGALI Case Study"*



During the September Digital Storytelling workshop in Malawi, AGALI Fellows wrote, produced and edited short videos highlighting the obstacles faced by adolescent girls in Malawi and how advocacy is a key strategy for achieving long-term solutions to these challenges. This successful workshop was the first step in AGALI's commitment to utilizing participatory video and storytelling methods to bolster the advocacy work of AGALI partner organizations. The final versions of these stories are available on AGALI's website, along with a discussion guide that AGALI Fellows are using in trainings and at community forums.

## Social Media

AGALI staff, grantees and Fellows are integrating social media into their advocacy strategies and targeting their messages using Facebook, YouTube and blogging platforms. In celebration of International Women's Day, the Huffington Post ran a series of blogs featuring three AGALI fellows: Esther Munthali (Malawi, 2011), Dora Alonzo Quijivix (Guatemala, 2011) and Aisha Cooper Bruce (Liberia, 2010). Later in the year AGALI Program Manager Emily Teitsworth also published a blog on the Huffington Post, focusing on the reintroduction of the Marriage Bill to Parliament in Malawi. AGALI Program Director Denise Dunning also published a Huffington Post blog highlighting AGALI within the context of the UN Global Youth Forum in Bali. (Please see Attachment D: AGALI Press Highlights.)



*AGALI's social media presence continues to grow, connecting our Fellows from around the world through Facebook, YouTube and blogs*

## IV. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy for adolescent girls remains both an urgent need and an ongoing challenge in the AGALI focus countries. Ongoing political changes continue to affect AGALI partners' work as they continue to advocate for improved protections for adolescent girls.

In Malawi, 2012 brought major political changes that have affected AGALI and AGANET activities in a variety of ways. In April, President Bingu wa Mutharika passed away, and was succeeded by his Vice President, Ms. Joyce Banda, who became the second female head of state in Africa. Reversing her predecessor's course, President Banda has begun to address Malawi's critical economic challenges, while focusing heavily on gender issues and women's empowerment. Although these national political changes have generated positive momentum for AGALI, challenges remain in working with conservative local leaders. For example, pro-polygamy leaders in the Muslim and traditional animist communities pressured the national Parliament not to vote on the revised Marriage Bill because it would prohibit polygamy, in addition to raising the legal age of marriage to 18 years. AGANET has continued to press for passage of the act, which will come up for a vote in 2013.

Governmental repression of advocacy remains a challenge for AGALI partners in Central America, as does widespread violence. In 2012, The Economist identified Honduras as the world's most violent country outside of a war zone, which noted that Hondurans are 80 times more likely to be murdered than Western Europeans. In Guatemala, over 700 women were killed in 2012, a nearly 40% increase over the previous year. This climate of extreme violence, along with systematic targeting of human rights defenders in both countries, contributed to a challenging year for Central American civil society. Despite these challenges, AGALI Fellows and alumni remain deeply committed to their ongoing advocacy efforts and serve as an invaluable source of support for one another.



Beyond these social and political challenges, environmental challenges have proven an obstacle to ongoing advocacy in Central America. A major earthquake in Guatemala prevented some of the AGALI Fellows from attending the November Institutional Strengthening workshop, as Fellows working with the government were required to participate in emergency relief efforts.

### AGALI's principal lessons learned from 2012 include the following:

- An initial evaluation conducted by an external consultant demonstrates significant results in the AGALI focus countries. These findings highlight many of AGALI's landmark advocacy and policy achievements and demonstrate the model's effectiveness in creating scalable and system-wide change for adolescent girls. These findings have led AGALI and UNF staff to invest in conducting a full-scale external evaluation in 2013.
- Providing resources to local organizations to implement their advocacy strategies is critical to improving adolescent girls' lives. With support from AGALI, grantees have successfully leveraged additional funding to launch and sustain strategic advocacy efforts to improve girls' health, education, livelihoods, and rights.
- AGALI's networks in Malawi and Honduras have successfully catalyzed national advocacy to improve adolescent girls' lives. However, despite the tremendous potential for Malawi's AGANET and the Honduras Advocacy Coalition to grow as national advocacy platforms, both networks are still in their early stages. Continued financial support and technical assistance, is needed to ensure AGANET and the Coalition will be able to achieve their full potential.

## V. CONCLUSION

Since 2009, the Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative has transformed the lives of thousands of adolescent girls around the world. AGALI's innovative model has generated the creation and improved implementation of laws, policies, and programs that directly benefit adolescent girls. By strengthening legal and policy frameworks through individual and organizational capacity building, AGALI is improving adolescent girls' health, education, livelihoods, and rights in Guatemala, Malawi, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Honduras.

Since 2009, AGALI has achieved dozens of concrete advocacy and policy results, strengthened the capacity of 89 leaders and their institutions to improve adolescent girls' lives, funded 40 advocacy strategies to strengthen laws and policies affecting girls, and reached over 40,000 girls with leadership programs, advocacy training, and direct services. This innovative program is a leader in the field – increasing adolescent girls' access to economic and educational opportunities, health, and human rights, strengthening civil society capacity, improving laws, policies, and funding for girls, and empowering adolescent girls to advocate for their own solutions to the challenges they face.



*Residents of AGALI grantee THINK's Safe Home for Girls  
Monrovia, Liberia*

**FOR THE LATEST NEWS ABOUT  
AGALI'S WORK PLEASE VISIT US AT:**

**[WWW.AGALIPROGRAM.ORG](http://WWW.AGALIPROGRAM.ORG)**

## VII. REPORT ATTACHMENTS

A. Girls Manifesto - THINK and HOPE Liberia

B. Malawi Press Highlights

C. Honduras Press Highlights

D. AGALI Staff Press Highlights & Online Key

E. Guatemala Case Study - IDEI

F. Liberia Case Study - THINK and HOPE

G. Liberia Policy Brief - The Children's Act

H. AGALI Digital Links

1. Digital Stories:

<http://agaliprogram.org/videos/agali-malawi-digital-stories-2012/>

2. The Children's Act Video:

<http://agaliprogram.org/videos/childrens-act-video/>

3. GENET's Video - The Story of Florence and Harmful Traditional Practices:

[http://youtu.be/n2wLYtg\\_02c](http://youtu.be/n2wLYtg_02c)



*Adolescent girls participating in AGALI grantee IDEI's activities, from AGALI Guatemala Case Study*



# ATTACHMENT A: GIRLS MANIFESTO THINK AND HOPE LIBERIA

## Manifesto for the Development and Empowerment of the Liberian Girl Child Adopted at a one-day Consultative Forum on Child Marriage in Commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child, Krystal Ocean View Hotel, Mamba Point, Monrovia, October 19, 2012

There is a power within a woman to create-to transform. We will tap into this power and challenge the system of exclusion that has kept women uneducated, unprotected, unempowered, under-served, and under-valued. We decree that we will be stakeholders of our own development. We, the future leaders of Liberia, are the face to which Liberia will be judged. Presented to Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Noble Peace Prize Recipient in November 2011

On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 66/170 to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, establishing a day to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.

The Global Theme, "Ending Child Marriage" was chosen this year because child marriage violates millions of girls' rights, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and denies them their childhood, limiting their opportunities.

We, the Girls of Liberia, present this Manifesto for the Development and Empowerment of the Liberian Girl Child in order to advocate to our national-level stakeholders. In order to end child marriage and its effects, the Liberian government and its partners must focus on our educational and leadership development needs. You must intensify your response to our sexual reproductive health needs and address the issue of rape and abuse against girls. We need you to work closely with our traditional leaders to review our traditional practices and address those that negatively affect girls.

This manifesto outlines key areas that we need you to respond to in order to ensure the development and empowerment of all Liberian girls. We are committed to serve as partners in our own development.

### Education and Leadership Development

- We want our schools to be safe places where we will learn and where we will not be harassed, molested or abused by other students or teachers.
- We need programs and services that will help girls who are pregnant and/or are mothers to stay in school.
- We need guidance counseling in our schools so that we will be encouraged to explore all our career options.
- We need more awareness to be created in schools and communities on the importance of leadership development for girls.
- We want a Leadership Development Curriculum to be taught in our schools.
- We want more opportunities for girls to work and participate as leaders and role models to other girls.
- We need counseling and empowerment programs that will help girls overcome fear and low self-esteem.

### Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

- We need organizations to provide family counseling and parenting workshops to help our parents to relate to us and be involved in our daily lives.
- We need safe spaces where we can go to ask questions and get accurate answers concerning our sexual reproductive health.
- Healthcare providers need to be properly trained and mandated to provide confidential, youth-friendly services.
- We need the government to provide adequate health facilities that will reach girls in the remote parts of Liberia.
- We want law enforcement authorities to ensure that rape and abuse cases will not be handled the "family way".
- We want the government to be vigilant about addressing the issue of "statutory rape" because many men continue to exploit and violate girls.
- We want the government to ensure that those who commit acts of rape that result in death or severe damage remain in jail for the rest of their lives.
- We want adequate mental health services and counseling for the survivors of rape and abuse.

### Harmful Traditional Practices

- We want to the government to work with our traditional leaders so that we have a choice in how we participate in our traditions.
- We want our families to make sure that girls have the same opportunities to go to school as boys.
- We want our parents to understand that some of the cultural ways that girls are disciplined are harmful and degrading.
- We want early marriage and the practice of our parents and guardians giving us to older men to end now, because this takes away all our opportunities to explore the world and puts heavy burdens on us.

**"I'm a GIRL, NOT a wife!"**

Signed this 13th Day of October 2012.

Irene Wynon

Fatu Kweya

Patience Wout

Shenel Henries

Victoria K. Pescoe

Siah Fallah

Marie Bengry

Tete M. Wessch

Sundaygirl Kollie

Maimah G. Kannah

Bridgette K. Williams

Comfort L. E. King

Marie Poulhonor

Nahbet Williams

Diplate Williams

Norwa K. Harris

Azeeline Terry

Rachel Norrie

Janga Jensen

Cynthia Blackie

Jaryce Cooper

Marth-Anna Love Wuant

Pauline Yormie

Fatu Sacker

Siemeah H. Kuffei

Jandii S. Cooper

Oretha K. Yeagan

Written by participants in the Girls Empowerment Forum







Malawi - 2012 PRESS COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

Malawi News - March 13, 2012

DEOGRAFIAS MMANA  
NEWS ANALYST

Stakeholders involved in 'Stop Child Marriage' campaign in Chiradzulu have called for a law that would ensure that girls that are abused through harmful cultural practices are punished. The stakeholders, who met at Chiradzulu Boma last Saturday under the auspices of Girl Empowerment Network (Genet), also urged traditional leaders to formulate punitive measures for those who force young girls into early marriages.

"It is not good that there is no law to protect girls from harmful practices. We need that law. In the meantime, I urge my fellow chiefs to punish parents who force their children into early marriage or send them to police," said Traditional Authority (T/A) Chitera.

Chiradzulu district social welfare officer Mike Masilihi said while there are laws protecting children, such laws lack the focus on harmful cultural practices and he concurred with Chitera on the need for a new law.

"These practices are really a burden and promote HIV. Chiefs, however, are custodians of culture and should come forth to talk us the other side of these cultural practices. People in the communities should also be empowered to speak against the harmful cultural practices," said Masilihi.

During the meeting, the participants, who included Genet members, government officials from the district council, police, chiefs, religious leaders and the media, asked the Ministry of Gender, Child and Community Development to help in the fight against early marriage by intensifying civic education on the dangers of early marriages for girls.

They also asked non-governmental organisations to set up rights clubs in the villages so that girls are empowered to see the dangers of early marriages. The members also asked chiefs to formulate stiff penalties for parents who force girls into early marriages.

The chiefs and other stakeholders at the meeting agreed that some parents are to blame for sending girls into early marriages for financial gain.

They also agreed that other girls who are orphaned are forced into early marriages by their

# Early marriage opponents want law on harmful cultural practices



Some of the girls in Chiradzulu who have openly voiced their opposition against early marriages

guardians.

Chief Chitera and sub T/A Sandraki also took a swipe at some *anankanga* whom they said fuel the malpractice by telling girls at initiation ceremonies to engage in sex as part of the initiation rite [*ikwotse fumbi*].

Chitera also blamed some girls for being arrogant and indulging in sexual activities in the name of exercising their human rights. Poverty was also mentioned as a cause for early marriages.

Genet communications officer Memory Banda disclosed that her organisation identified 20 girls who were forced into early marriages in traditional authorities Chitera and sub-traditional authority Sandraki. She said Genet is rehabilitating such girls and some have already properly been married.

"Ten of the girls got pregnant from initiation ceremonies because they were told to have sex as part of the rite [*ikwotse fumbi*]."

Two of the girls came out and spoke against it. We are rehabilitating these girls. We engage them in family planning talks and HIV and Aids meetings. They are our



Against early marriages: Chitera

ambassadors and they talk to other girls in the two areas on the dangers of early marriages," said Banda, adding that Genet is running a one-year programme in the two areas with funds from Public Health Institute.

A 28-year-old mother of four, Aida Naweni, from Chitera

her to find a man, but she refused. Young men at the place she was kept were bothering her for sex and she decided to leave the house. She moulded bricks and built her own hut. In 2000, she got married but the man left for South Africa. She has four children. She said there is no peace in her marriage because the man's relatives want another woman.

"Since he left for South Africa, he only sent K4 000 which I used to rehabilitate the house which was collapsing. Since his parents are telling him to look for another woman, I do not know whether he is faithful there, I put everything in the hands of God," said Naweni.

Chiradzulu district Aids coordinator Chris Nawata said early marriages were promoting the spread of HIV in the district because most of the men involved have already had sexual activities with other women. Nawata said Chiradzulu is at 15 percent HIV infection rate.

"We are fighting hard for girls to delay their first sex experience. We are also fighting against this trans-generational sex between men and the young girls because it is bad," said Nawata. ■



Written By: Malawi Voice Reporter- on March 14, 2012.



Memory Banda-Communications Officer for Girls Empowerment Network

## Girls Network challenges Chiradzulu Chiefs on harmful cultural practices

A Non-Governmental Organization working in the areas of girls empowerment and rights Girls Empowerment Network (GENET) has dared community leaders from Chiradzulu district to stop perpetrating harmful cultural practices that hamper the rights of young girls in the district.

Speaking during the girls' empowerment forum on Saturday at Chiradzulu district council hall, Communications Officer for GENET Memory Banda alleged chiefs were to blame for the increased cases of girl-child abuse such as early and forced marriages because they tolerate harmful practices to happen in their villages.

"Chiefs should not pretend that they are not aware of what their subjects are doing out there. They know and allow this to happen under the pretext of cultural preservation. But this puts the lives of innocent girls at risk of contracting deadly pandemic of HIV and AIDS," charged Banda.

She said unless community leaders took a role in abolishing harmful cultural practices, the fight against challenges that haunt many innocent girls will not be won in the district.

"Chiradzulu is one of the districts with shocking statistics of early and forced girl marriages. But this can be halted successfully if chiefs can join hands with NGOs like GENET in order to abolish them because these sad practices happen right in their territories," said Banda.

During the forum which drew participants from various crucial sectors of development such as gender and Malawi Police Service, GENET announced the introduction of chiefs and villages' competition on the promotion of girls' rights.

"A chief or village that will maneuver a successful fight against girl-child abuse will be recognized and receive a glamorous award plus a girl empowerment project right in his or her area. The idea behind this competition is to fight challenges that girls face in order to make their communities a safe haven for them to live," said Banda.

Speaking at the same function was Traditional Authority (T/A) Chitera who took a swipe on fellow chiefs for perpetrating harmful cultural practices that damage innocent girls.

Mike Maulidi who is Chiradzulu District Social Welfare Officer advocated for girl-child education, arguing education was an effective tool to gun down harmful cultural practices.

"The more our girls are educated the more chances they make independent positive decisions which are relevant to their public life," said Maulidi.

## Marriage Age Should be 18 Years- AGANET

Written By: [Erasmus Lloyd M'bwana](#) on September 28, 2012.

**Deputy Minister of Education,  
Science and Technology,  
Chikumbutso Hiwa Was The  
Guest Of Honour At The Event**

With the enthusiasm to improve girls' education in Malawi, Adolescent Girls Advocacy Network (AGANET) has urged the government to make sure that marriage age should be 18 years unlike at 16.

The call has been made during the national conference AGANET organized in Lilongwe with the funding from Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI), Malawi government and Public Health Institute (PHI).

With the conference' theme *"Educate a Girl: Change the Nation"*, the forum aimed at soliciting views from the public on how best adolescent girls' education standards could be uplifted such that case of sexual harassment which leads into forced and early marriages, pregnancies and abortions could be eradicated in Malawi.

*"We are urging the Malawi government to enact the marriage law which says that a girl can marry at the age of 16. This is a threat to our adolescent girls' education. Thus, marriage age should be 18 year or above as this will facilitate the completion of their studies smoothly. This will be easy if there is a political will in our members of parliament who were mandated to enact bad laws that infringe citizens"*, urges Harward Kasiya, AGANET's National coordinator.



**Girls: There Is All Need To Safeguard Girls Like This**



Deputy Minister of Education,  
Science and Technology,  
Chikumbutso Hiwa



AGANET National Coordinator,  
Harward Kasiya

However, the jump act conference room was touched with the ordeal story which a standard 7 girl from Chigumula, Blantyre narrated to the audience that she was chased out of her mother's home after she refused to sleep with her step father. Thus, it took AGANET to rescue her from such a sexual harassment.

*"I was chased out of my mother house after I refused to sleep with my step father. Then, I was rescued by AGANET after a friend introduced me to them in Chiladzuru. AGANET made is possible to reunite me with my parents who are now a bit comfort with me. But I wish, I could find another place to leave unlike my parents' home,* narrates the 15 year old girl who wants to become a teacher after school.

Thus, AGANET was established to strive in bringing together individuals, organizations and institutions from the public, private and development partners to advocate for voice and action that would avert the plight of adolescent girls in Malawi and facilitate a visible and unique promotion of their wellbeing and sustainable livelihood.





HONDURAS COALITION - 2012 PRESS COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

La Tribuna - February 24, 2012

“Permitting youth to make responsible decisions”



“Youth remind the state, comply with the Ministerial Declaration agreements ‘Prevention through Education’ ”

*En la Semana Nacional de la Juventud:*

## Jóvenes recuerdan al Estado, cumplir Con acuerdos de la Declaración Ministerial “Prevenir con Educación”

Con motivo de celebrarse la Semana Nacional de la Juventud, la Coalición de Abogacía por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivo de Adolescentes, recuerda al Estado asumir el compromiso que tiene con los jóvenes, en cumplir con los acuerdos de la Declaración Ministerial “Prevenir con Educación”, que suscribieron los ministros de salud y educación de América Latina y el Caribe, a fin de frenar la epidemia del VIH y el embarazo no deseado en adolescentes.

La Coalición de adolescentes conformada por organizaciones de la sociedad civil, vinculados a la defensa y promoción de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, aboga para que los tomadores de decisión de ambas secretarías, garanticen a los adolescentes y jóvenes acceso a los recursos de prevención de la infección por el VIH y promover la Educación Integral en Sexualidad como estrategia que contribuya a mejorar su calidad de vida.

Según datos oficiales a septiembre 2011 se registra 29, 757 personas con el VIH, de los cuales unos 11,550 son jóvenes y en el



Jóvenes de diferentes centros educativos de la capital, recuerdan al Estado hondureño, cumplir con los acuerdos de la Declaración Ministerial “Prevenir con Educación”

Hospital Escuela, de cada 100 partos atendidos alrededor del 40 por ciento son de madres adolescentes.

Integran la Coalición de adolescentes el Foro Nacional de Sida, ASHONPLAFA, APUVIMEH, ChidFund Honduras e Impactos, entre otras organizaciones.

El Heraldo – May 19, 2012

“Youth receive HIV-AIDS training”

El Heraldo, sábado 19 de mayo de 2012

## COMAYAGUA Jóvenes reciben taller sobre VIH-sida

**Comayagua.** La evolución del VIH y los avances en la prevención de la enfermedad fueron compartidos por el personal de Ashonplafa con jóvenes y personal de Salud de Comayagua.

Los talleres formativos son ofrecidos a diferentes grupos del país, luego que Honduras participara en la declaratoria Prevenir con Educación, en el marco de la XVII Conferencia Internacional del VIH-sida.

“El compromiso de este programa es contribuir a frenar la epidemia del VIH en Honduras y los embar-

FOTO: JUAN C. DÍAZ



La formación se extendió por varias horas.

zos no deseados entre adolescentes”, explicó José Agüero, técnico del programa.

El departamento de Comayagua aparece en el quinto lugar de incidencia de VIH entre la población joven.

“La vulnerabilidad del VIH”, “Comportamiento de alto riesgo”, “Inicio temprano de relaciones sexuales” y “Estigma y discriminación” fueron algunos temas abordados en el taller.

Los participantes además se comprometieron a colaborar con las acciones preventivas en la comunidad, debido a que para frenar los índices de la enfermedad están conscientes de que deben participar de forma conjunta. ■

Juan C. Díaz • El Heraldo



“Honduras ratifies Ministerial Declaration agreements”



## ATTACHMENT D: AGALI Press Highlights

### ONLINE KEY

1. Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 5, 2012

"Girls Advocating for Girls"

By Kathy Calvin

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-calvin/international-womensday\\_b\\_1322548.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-calvin/international-womensday_b_1322548.html)

2. Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 7, 2012

"The Rights of Adolescent Girls in the Real World: My Experience"

By AGALI 2011 Fellow Dora Alonzo-Quijivix

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dora-alonzo-quijivix/guatemala-childrens-rights\\_b\\_1327204.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dora-alonzo-quijivix/guatemala-childrens-rights_b_1327204.html)

3. "Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series- March 8, 2012 A Dream Deferred"

By AGALI 2011 Malawi Fellow Esther Munthali

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/esther-munthali/womens-education-malawi\\_b\\_1327966.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/esther-munthali/womens-education-malawi_b_1327966.html)

4. Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 9, 2012

"Their Voices Will Be Heard"

By AGALI 2010 Liberia Fellow Aisha Cooper Bruce

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aisha-cooper-bruce/womens-empowerment-liberia\\_b\\_1327921.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aisha-cooper-bruce/womens-empowerment-liberia_b_1327921.html)

5. GirlUp Blog – September 17, 2012

"Q & A with AGALI Team"

By Denise Dunning and Emily Teitsworth

<http://www.girlup.org/blog/agali-q-a.html>

6. GirlUp Blog – September 17, 2012

"Q & A with AGALI Team"

By Denise Dunning and Emily Teitsworth

<http://www.girlup.org/blog/agali-q-a.html>

7. RH Reality Check - October 10, 2012

"AGALI Celebrates the First Annual Day of the Girl Child"

By Emily Teitsworth

<http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2012/10/10/agali-celebrates-first-annual-day-girl-child-1/>

8. Huffington Post - December 3, 2012

"The Beginning of the End for Child Marriage"

By Emily Teitsworth

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emily-teitsworth/child-marriage\\_b\\_2231142.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emily-teitsworth/child-marriage_b_2231142.html)

9. Huffington Post - December 17, 2012



## 2012 PRESS COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

### Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 5, 2012

#### "Girls Advocating for Girls"

By Kathy Calvin

(First in a series of four published for International Women's Day)

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a Huffington Post article. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.huffpost.com/kathy-calvin/international-women-s-day-120305-girls>. The page header includes "THE BLOG" and "Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors". The author's name, "Kathy Calvin", is prominently displayed, along with her title "CEO, The Center for Global Motherhood". The article title is "Girls Advocating for Girls", published on 03/05/12 at 7:18 AM. The article text begins with: "Exactly one year ago this week, I delivered a letter to Regina Blay. As a 15-year-old girl growing up in Liberia, she faces tremendous challenges every day, including accessing health services, safe spaces, and basic education. The letter was written from a girl in the U.S. through the U.N. Foundation's Girl Up campaign, and talked about her hopes and dreams for girls around the world. I was traveling through Liberia with Michelle Dudulec, executive director of U.S. Women, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8. Now, on the most anniversary, I find myself reflecting on my own hopes and dreams for girls around the world." Below the text, there is a sidebar with a "Catapult" fundraising progress bar for "Support Girls and Women Worldwide". The progress bar shows a goal of \$61,660 and a current amount of \$0, with 2 days to go. The sidebar also features a photo of a young girl and a "Watch Your Girl Make a Difference" section.



# Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 7, 2012

## "The Rights of Adolescent Girls in the Real World: My Experience"

By AGALI 2011 Fellow Dora Alonzo-Quijivix

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Huffington Post article. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dora-alonzo-quijivix/guatemala-childrens-rights\\_b\\_1327204.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dora-alonzo-quijivix/guatemala-childrens-rights_b_1327204.html). The page header includes the author's name, 'Dora Alonzo Quijivix', and her affiliation, 'Fellow, Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI)'. The article title is 'The Rights of Adolescent Girls in the Real World: My Experience', posted on 03/7/2012 at 3:05 pm. The article is categorized as 'Inspiring', 'Motivating', 'Moving', 'Scary', 'Outrageous', 'Amazing', 'Innovative', and 'Helpful'. The main text discusses the importance of children's rights in Guatemala, noting that while laws exist, they are often not valued or enforced, particularly for indigenous girls. It mentions that 30 percent of all indigenous girls in Guatemala are engaged in child labor. The author, Dora Alonzo-Quijivix, is one of 156 girls and boys from across Guatemala working together to change their future as members of the National Children's Parliament. The right sidebar features a 'MOST POPULAR' section with several article thumbnails and titles, including 'PHOTOS: Anne Hathaway's Nipples Steal The Show On The Oscars Red Carpet' and 'Seth MacFarlane's Shocking Rihanna & Chris Brown Joke'. The bottom of the screenshot shows the Windows taskbar with various application icons and the system clock displaying 12:13 PM on 2/25/2013.

# Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 8, 2012

## "A Dream Deferred"

By AGAU 2011 Malawi Fellow Esther Munthali

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Huffington Post article. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://www.huffpost.com/esther-munthali/women-education-malawi\\_122288.html](http://www.huffpost.com/esther-munthali/women-education-malawi_122288.html). The page title is "Esther Munthali: A Dream Deferred". The author's name, "Esther Munthali", is prominently displayed with a small profile picture and a bio: "Police, Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI), Program Officer, Foundation for Community Support Services (FOCUS)". The article title "A Dream Deferred" is in a large, bold font, with a sub-headline "Posted 03/08/2012 11:18 am". Below the title is a navigation bar with tags like "Inspiring", "Motivating", "Moving", "Sexy", "Outrageous", "Amazing", "Innovative", and "Helpful". The article text begins with "As a child, I dreamed of becoming a nurse. At 16, I completed my primary education, a rare feat for girls in Malawi, where less than a quarter of girls graduate from primary school. I hoped to pursue my career in nursing, but unfortunately, my family had other plans for me. One day, my aunt invited me for a discussion. 'As a girl of your age,' started my aunt, 'you need to get married and bear a child as you are still young and energetic, otherwise if you delay you will not find a suitable man to marry you.' After all, she said, 'marriage is at a tender age, and if you wait, you risk being not wanted by men.' So my dream of becoming a nurse was deferred. Like many young women in my rural community, I found myself accepting a marriage arranged by my aunt and sister. In Malawi, roughly half of girls marry by age 19, although this number is higher in rural communities. I stayed in this marriage for seven years, until my husband passed away unexpectedly, leaving me to care for two young boys. At that time, my youngest son was a year old. I was filled with worry over how I would pay for schooling fees and basic necessities. While thinking of my options, I decided to go back to school in order to support my family. At the age of 26, I went back to school for a two-year course in commercial studies. Eventually, I found employment as a typist in an institution where HIV/AIDS programs are implemented. While there, I developed an interest in working with communities, especially women and girls, in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Malawi has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, ranking 9th globally. HIV/AIDS is a health issue that disproportionately affects the lives of adolescent girls — in 2007, close to 1

**WHICH INDUSTRY IS ALREADY HELPING TO STRENGTHEN THE STATE OF THE UNION?**

**MOST POPULAR**

**PHOTOS: Anne Hathaway's Nipples Steal The Show On The Oscars Red Carpet**

# Huffington Post International Women's Day Blog Series - March 9, 2012

## "Their Voices Will Be Heard"

By AGALI 2010 Liberia Fellow Aisha Cooper Bruce

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser Tabs:** "Aisha Cooper Bruce: Their...", "Kathy Calvin: Girls Advocating...", "Welcome To A Skyband HL", "Image file formats - TP, L...", "Superhuttle Web Coor...", "CC Mechanics Bank".
- Navigation:** "File", "Edit", "View", "Favorites", "Tools", "Help".
- Page Header:** "WATCH: 'Inocente', Story Of Undocumented Latina Wins Oscar", "Oscar's 6 Biggest Winners (Even if They Don't Go Home With Trophies)", "Bungee Jump Charity".
- THE BLOG:** "Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors".
- Author Profile:** "Aisha Cooper Bruce", Fellow, Adolescent Girls' Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI); Program director, Helping Our People Excel (HOPE). Includes "GET UPDATES FROM AISHA COOPER BRUCE" with links for Facebook, RSS, Email, and Like.
- Article Title:** "Their Voices Will Be Heard".
- Post Date:** "Posted: 03/09/2012 1:47 am".
- Tags:** "Inspiring", "Motivating", "Moving", "Scary", "Outrageous", "Amazing", "Innovative", "Helpful".
- Follow:** "Women's Empowerment", "Women's Rights", "Girl UP", "Girl Up Campaign", "International Women's Empowerment", "Women Liberia", "Womens Empowerment Liberia", "Impact News".
- Share This Story:** "Like 10 people like this. Be the first of your friends." Includes buttons for "Like", "10", "16", "4", "0", "Share", "Tweet", "Email", and "+1".
- Text Snippets:**
  - "the highest bidder.
  - I hear their voices crying out.
  - "We are afraid of trouble, we [are] afraid of our boyfriends beating and abusing us."
  - "There is no work for us to do and we are not fit to work because we are not going to school."
- Right Sidebar:** "ADVERTISEMENT" for "Just b..." and "Flavor BOOST" cereal. "MOST POP" section with images of a woman, a group of people, and a man.
- Taskbar:** Windows taskbar with icons for Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Photoshop, Office, Word, and PDF.



## GirlUp Blog – September 17, 2012

### “Q & A with AGALI Team”

By Denise Dunning and Emily Teitworth

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the GirlUp website. The address bar shows the URL <http://www.girlup.org/blog/agali-q&a.html>. The browser's address bar contains several tabs, including "Alpha Corps Base: Their Ho...", "Q&A with AGALI team | G...", and "Q&A with AGALI team | GirlUp...". The browser's menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Favorites", "Tools", and "Help". The browser's status bar shows several open pages, including "ceipr (centro e américa...", "Welcome To A Skyband H...", "Image file formats - TE, L...", "SuperStable Web Confir...", and "CC Mechanics Bank".

The website header features the GirlUp logo on the left, which includes a stylized bird icon and the text "girlup" and "Uniting Girls to Change the World". To the right of the logo is a "join the movement" section with input fields for "Email\*" and "Zip\*", and a "SIGN UP" button. Further right is a "quick links" section with links for "parents", "press", "educators", and "shop". Below these links are social media icons for "Like" and "Tweet", along with a "210k" and "3" indicator.

Below the header is a navigation bar with six buttons: "learn" (Find Out More), "about" (Our Story), "blog" (The Latest), "take action" (Get Involved), "clubs" (Start Today), and "donate" (Give A High Five).

The main content area features a large heading "q&a with agali team" and a "Connect" section on the right. The "Connect" section includes a "Feb 22 Happy Friday" notification and a "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" button. Below the "Connect" section is an "Events" section with the text "There are currently no Girl Up events. Check back for more soon!" and a "ALL EVENTS" link.

The main content area also includes a "CATEGORIES" section on the left with a list of categories: AGALI, BETS, CHAMPIONS, CHICAGO, CIVIL MARRIAGE, CLUBS, D.C., DAY OF THE GIRL, DENVER, EDUCATION, ETHIOPIA, EVENTS, FAR FEMALE FRIDAY, FATHERS DAY, and GIRL UP.

The main content area features a photo of two women, Denise Dunning and Emily Teitworth, with their names written below them. The photo is dated "SEP 17 by GRL UP". Below the photo is a text block that reads: "We recently caught up with Denise Dunning, Director, and Emily Teitworth, Program Coordinator, of the AGALI tours. These awesome women weighed in on what American girls can do to help their counterparts in developing nations and what their favorite girl power song is at the moment!" Below this text is a "Girl Up: What is AGALI?" section that reads: "Denise Dunning: AGALI (Adolescent Girls' Advocacy Leadership Initiative) is a global movement of leaders who are working to improve adolescent girls' lives. AGALI provides training, funding, and support to leaders in Africa and Latin America who advocate for laws, policies, and funding to improve girls' health, education, and livelihoods."

## RH Reality Check - October 10, 2012

### "AGALI Celebrates the First Annual Day of the Girl Child"

By Emily Teitsworth

The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying the RH Reality Check website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://realitycheck.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=104:agi-celebrates-the-first-annual-day-girl-child](http://realitycheck.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104:agi-celebrates-the-first-annual-day-girl-child). The website header features the RH Reality Check logo, navigation menus for 'Front', 'Sections', 'Topics', 'Video', 'Audio', 'Follow Us', 'About Us', and 'Donate', and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and RSS. The main content area is titled 'COMMENTARY - HUMAN RIGHTS' and features the article 'AGALI Celebrates the First Annual Day of the Girl Child' by Emily Teitsworth, dated October 10, 2012. The article text begins with 'Today, from Lilongwe, Malawi to Guatemala City, Guatemala, Fellows of the Adolescent Girls Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI) are celebrating the first annual Day of the Girl Child.' It continues with 'For the first time, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution to declare October 11th as the International Day of the Girl Child, establishing a special day to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges facing girls and young women globally. Since then, activists around the world have been advocating for government recognition of the Day of the Girl Child and planning events to commemorate this historic day.' The article also mentions 'On this first annual Day of the Girl Child, I am excited to share the inspiring work being done by some of our 89 AGALI Fellows in Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa.' A section titled 'Guatemala' describes an event organized by CONACMI. On the right side of the page, there is a 'DONATE TODAY' banner with a checkmark icon and a Facebook widget showing recent posts from RH Reality Check. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock.

AGALI Celebrates the First Annual Day of the Girl Child

by Emily Teitsworth, Public Health Institute  
October 10, 2012 - 7:36 pm

Today, from Lilongwe, Malawi to Guatemala City, Guatemala, Fellows of the Adolescent Girls Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI) are celebrating the first annual Day of the Girl Child.

For the first time, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution to declare October 11th as the International Day of the Girl Child, establishing a special day to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges facing girls and young women globally. Since then, activists around the world have been advocating for government recognition of the Day of the Girl Child and planning events to commemorate this historic day.

On this first annual Day of the Girl Child, I am excited to share the inspiring work being done by some of our 89 AGALI Fellows in Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Guatemala**

AGALI partner organization the National Association Against Child Abuse (CONACMI) is organizing a press conference in Guatemala City to highlight strategies to protect girls' rights, and to showcase their successful advocacy work. Three additional AGALI Fellows' organizations will participate in the press conference. CONACMI and other AGALI partners

Support fact-based news, analysis and commentary on issues you care about.

**DONATE TODAY**

RH Reality Check

When legislators write laws to enforce other laws that the courts ignore blocked, you know they really just want to ban abortion any way they can.

100%

Huffington Post - December 3, 2012

## "The Beginning of the End for Child Marriage"

By Emily Teitsworth

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Huffington Post article "The Beginning of the End for Child Marriage" by Emily Teitsworth. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://www.huffpost.com/emily-teitsworth/child-marriage\\_1231142.html](http://www.huffpost.com/emily-teitsworth/child-marriage_1231142.html). The page features a navigation bar with "THE BLOG" and a list of contributors including Dr. Owen Greenh and Ernest Barret. A sidebar on the right promotes a "Catapult" campaign by Johnson & Johnson, titled "Support Girls and Women Worldwide," with a progress bar showing \$6,146 of \$12,290 needed and 2 days to go. The main article content includes a sub-header "GLOBAL MOTHERHOOD" and a paragraph discussing child marriage in Malawi, stating that nearly 47 percent of girls are married before the age of 18.

THE BLOG  
Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from  
HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors

Dr. Owen Greenh  
Ernest Barret

Dr. Peggy Insler  
Blanca Jagger

Log in with Facebook to see what your friends are reading. [Expand your reading.](#)

**Emily Teitsworth**  
Program manager, Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI) at the Public Health Institute

GET UPDATES FROM EMILY TEITSWORTH  
FAN RSS EMAIL Like

### The Beginning of the End for Child Marriage

Posted: 12/03/12 10:17 am

Tags: Inspiring, Motivating, Moving, Social, Outrageous, Amazing, Innovative, Inspire

Read more: [AIDS Child Marriage](#), [Child Marriage](#), [Child Marriage Africa](#), [Ending Child Marriage](#), [Child Marriage](#), [Child Marriage and](#), [Infant News](#)

**GLOBAL MOTHERHOOD** in partnership with Johnson & Johnson

Support Girls and Women Worldwide

Adoption & Empowering Adolescent Girls [OUR FRIENDS](#)

Watch Your Gift Make a Difference

\$6146 OF \$12290 NEEDED

DAYS TO GO 2

67 20 2

Like 214 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

67 20 2

Submit this story

Before the end of the year, the lives of millions of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa will be transformed, in what many are calling the beginning of the end for child marriage. The national Parliament of Malawi is poised to increase the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 years, a monumental step forward for gender equality in one of the poorest nations on earth.

Each day around the world, at least 25,000 girls are married too early, dramatically reducing the likelihood that they will complete school, become economically self-sufficient, or stay healthy. Pregnancy is the leading cause of death worldwide for women ages 15 to 49, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, girls ages 15-49 are two to six times more likely to contract HIV than boys of the same age, largely due to the practice of child marriage. (ICRW, 2012). Malawi, currently ranked 173 out of 180 countries globally for GDP per capita, has struggled for decades to confront the crisis of child marriage (World Bank, 2004). Nearly 47 percent of girls in Malawi are married before the age of 18, some as early as 12 years-old. These girls are forced to drop out of school, suffer the life-threatening health consequences of early childbearing, and often face a lifetime of abuse at the hands of a much-older husband they did not choose to marry.



Huffington Post - December 17, 2012

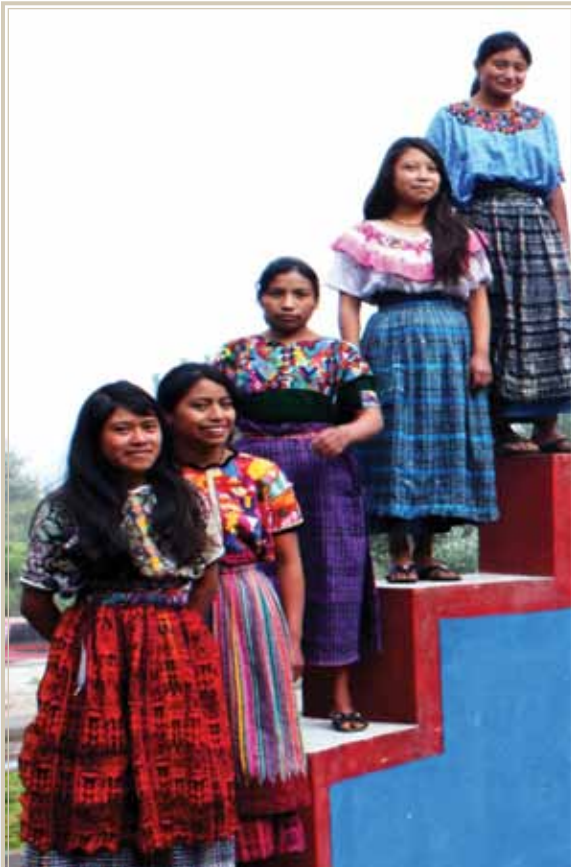
## "Bali Magic: The Global Youth Forum"

By Denise Dunning

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Huffington Post article. The address bar shows the URL: [http://www.huffpost.com/entry/dunning-global-youth-forum-bali\\_1221881.html](http://www.huffpost.com/entry/dunning-global-youth-forum-bali_1221881.html). The browser's address bar contains the text "ning: Bali Magi...". The page header includes "THE BLOG" and "Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors". A "HOT ON THE BLOG" section lists "Dr. Dean Ornish" and "Emad Benat". Another section lists "Dr. Peggy Drexler" and "Elana Jagger". The article is by Denise Dunning, Program Director, Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative. The title is "Bali Magic: The Global Youth Forum". The post date is 12/17/2012 2:46 pm. The article text begins: "The taxi driver who picked me up at the airport was a young man who told me, in utmost seriousness, 'Here in Bali, magic is real.' Most other places don't have magic, he said, and people only believe in concrete things they can actually see. But in Bali, he told me proudly, there is magic in all things and people believe in the possibilities they imagine, not just in the reality they see before their eyes." The article continues: "Thinking back on last week, I wonder if it was this magic that explains the historic conclusion of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 Global Youth Forum in Bali. Was it magic that made it possible for a group of young leaders from around the world to develop the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration, a landmark set of policy recommendations that have the power to shape the future of their governments, the UN and the global development agenda for generations to come?" The article concludes: "Magic or not, young leaders at the Global Youth Forum believed in what is possible, not just in the reality they see before their eyes. Like the Balinese, these young leaders chose to create a reality that they can imagine -- one in which all young people have the opportunity to finish school and find decent employment, where girls are protected from genital mutilation and child marriage, where schools teach life skills and comprehensive sexuality education, and where governments involve youth as equal stakeholders in the creation of policies and programs that will shape their time." On the right side, there is a "Catapult" advertisement in partnership with Johnson & Johnson, titled "Support Girls and Women Worldwide". It features a photo of a young girl and a fundraising progress bar showing \$6146 of \$12750 needed, with 3 days to go. The progress bar is at 49%.



## ADVOCACY CASE STUDY: TRANSFORMING INDIGENOUS GIRLS' LIVES IN GUATEMALA



*Adolescent girls participating in the "Rights in Action" campaign in Concepción Chiquirichapa, Guatemala*

### Background

Guatemala's population is among the fastest growing and most ethnically diverse in Latin America – nearly half of the country's 14.7 million inhabitants belong to an indigenous Mayan ethnic group. The majority of indigenous Guatemalans live in extreme poverty and have limited access to education, healthcare, and even basic services such as water and sanitation (Dries-Daffner, 2007). In addition to tremendous economic and social challenges, Guatemalans struggle with pervasive violence and the scars left by the country's 36-year civil war, which ended in 1996.

Two of the areas hardest-hit by the civil war are the indigenous towns of Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá, located in Guatemala's Western highland region in the Department of Quetzaltenango. This region is predominantly Mam-speaking and among the poorest in Guatemala, where only 14% of rural indigenous girls complete primary school (Hallman, 2007) and 1% of the population has attained a university education (UNDP, 2010). Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá suffered mass displacement and violence as a result of the civil war, and recently struggled with a severe shortage of potatoes, their primary cash crop. The deepened poverty that resulted has caused mass migration to Mexico and the United States, leaving behind disintegrated families led primarily by female heads of household.

This case study examines how the Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative partnered with the Association for Research, Development and Education (IDEI) to empower adolescent girls in Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá to lead the development and rehabilitation of their communities. IDEI's success demonstrates the importance of advocacy to address grassroots community needs and to empower marginalized populations to participate in the democratic process, in addition to highlighting the potential for adolescent girls to become community leaders and advocates for their own needs.

### The Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI)

The Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI) improves adolescent girls' health, education, livelihoods, and rights by strengthening advocacy efforts and leadership capacity in Latin America and Africa. Through capacity building, grant-making, and technical assistance, AGALI improves socio-economic and educational opportunities for adolescent girls, increases girls' access to quality health services, and empowers young women to develop their own solutions to the challenges they face. Since 2009, AGALI has built a global movement of leaders and organizations that are transforming the lives of adolescent girls. This case study highlights the advocacy work of AGALI partner and grantee, the Association for Research, Development and Education (IDEI) in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

## Empowering Girls to Advocate for Themselves

Founded in 1994, IDEI works throughout the Western Highlands of Guatemala on health, education, research and infrastructure projects, using strategies grounded in community participation, gender equity, human rights, and cultural respect. In 2009, IDEI staff member Juany García Perez became a Fellow of the Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative, and was awarded AGALI funding to launch a pilot project to create girl-friendly public policies in Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá. In partnership with AGALI, the IDEI team worked with adolescent girls during the year-long project to advocate with local authorities for policies that promoted adolescent girls' health, education, and development.

Rather than advocating for girls and young women, IDEI staff built girls' capacity to raise their own voices and advocate directly with government decision-makers for increased funding for girl-friendly policies. As a result of this pilot initiative, both town mayors approved and signed the policies developed by IDEI and the girl advocates. Further, the mayor of Concepción allocated 0.5% percent of the total yearly municipal budget to open a Municipal Office of Childhood and Adolescence. These successes represent major advocacy accomplishments, especially because they were designed and led by indigenous adolescent girls and because IDEI did not have previous experience advocating for the budget increases needed to ensure successful policy implementation at the local level.



***“The major issue with adolescents on a national level is that there are no real spaces for youth to have any decision-making power. IDEI offered a real space for us to participate.”***

*--Yessenia Chanax, 19 year old youth advocate and Technical Assistant to the AGALI-IDEI Project*

*Girls in San Miguel Sigüilá participating in the “I dream” contest sponsored by the AGALI project*

Even before partnering with AGALI, IDEI was deeply committed to empowering girls and youth as protagonists in their own development. One of IDEI's organizational principles is “mediating pedagogy”, in which the educator works with participants to analyze their community's needs and develop solutions to the problems they identify. Using this methodology, IDEI has participated in a variety of national youth development initiatives, including the planning and implementation of the national Guatemalan Youth Parliament. Ten percent of the girls who participated in IDEI's advocacy project were already part of the organization's ongoing youth leadership programs and the Guatemalan Youth Parliament prior to becoming involved in the advocacy initiative. By combining the principals of mediating pedagogy and youth leadership with advocacy capacity building and tools from AGALI, IDEI created an innovative new model for successful advocacy led by adolescent girls.



## Prioritizing Girls' Needs

With support from AGALI, IDEI has taken a multi-faceted approach to developing and implementing public policies that actively engage girls, including training and empowering girls to advocate for their own needs, educating local leaders and key decision-makers about the many issues faced by indigenous girls, and using print and radio media as a community awareness-building tool.

The first stage of IDEI's democratic participation project empowered 40 adolescent girls and young women in Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá to advocate for the approval and implementation of girl-friendly municipal public policies. These public policies ensure that local government addresses girls' unique needs in the areas of health, education, HIV prevention, and culturally-relevant family violence prevention.

When Juany became an AGALI Fellow, she began using tools she learned in the AGALI program to build upon IDEI's existing work with adolescent girls. Employing her new advocacy skills, Juany encouraged IDEI's adolescent girl participants to plan and implement an advocacy strategy. Unlike the majority of advocacy initiatives, the girls themselves led all aspects of their own advocacy campaign, from inviting other organizations and government institutions to become allies to meeting directly with local authorities and municipal mayors to present and defend the proposed public policies. The girls decided they would

*“Using our methodology, we see a 13 year old who speaks very clearly about what a public policy is, why it’s important and how it affects her.”*

*--Janet Ikeda,  
IDEI Executive Director*

- 1) An adolescent girl speaking at a municipal meeting in Concepción Chiquirichapa
- 2) AGALI project participants marching on International Women's Day in San Miguel Sigüilá



advocate with the municipal governments of Concepción Chiquirichapa and San Miguel Sigüilá to promote the integrated development of adolescent girls in health, education, HIV, and domestic violence prevention through the participation of girls and young women in government policy decisions. They also decided to convince the mayors of both towns to allocate 0.5% of the municipal budget to ensure the implementation of girl-friendly public policies.

When IDEI initiated its AGALI-funded advocacy strategy, adolescent girls in both municipalities worked together to plan general municipal assembly meetings and public forums to garner public and stakeholder support. Participants included representatives from the various municipal sub-commissions, town mayors and their staff, and traditional community authorities. The girls created several commissions to involve all segments of the communities in the advocacy initiative, including: the Protection Commission, which organized talks with parents about violence prevention and the legal process in cases of family violence; the Participation Commission, which provided information about peer counseling, organized youth mural painting projects, and ensured direct youth participation in the advocacy process; and the Health Commission, which conducted bilingual radio programming in Mam and Spanish to provide young people and their parents with information about sexuality, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and teenage pregnancy. IDEI ensured that print and radio media representatives covered the girls' major events to promote local and national awareness of the initiative.

*“The groups of girls and adolescents are the fundamental pillars that breathe life into the decrees, laws and conventions because they are ultimately the beneficiaries and they best know their own needs and reality. They lend credibility to the implementation of public policy that arises from a truly felt need that is expressed directly by the beneficiary population.”*

*--Juany García Perez, 2009 AGALI Fellow*

## **Sustaining Girls' Advocacy Success**

One of the greatest successes of IDEI's work has been to attain the proposed 0.5% municipal budget allocation to ensure girl-friendly public policy implementation in Concepción Chiquirichapa. In collaboration with IDEI, the local government has used this new funding to establish the Municipal Office of Childhood and Adolescence, which provides adolescent girls, their parents, and the community with a range of support services. The first phase of the project achieved municipal approval for the budgetary allocation in Concepción, and the second phase has seen the establishment and staffing of the office, where several girl-focused projects are already underway. These projects include classes for parents, self-help and peer counseling for adolescents, legal accompaniment in cases of rape and intra-family violence, community sensitization on human rights, and the increased participation of girls and adolescents in the democratic process.

Another significant achievement of IDEI's advocacy initiative has been the election of two adolescent girls as members of the Municipal Board of Directors of the Municipal Commission of Children and Youth. While young people had been members of the Commission in the past, no girls had ever held leadership positions on the Board of Directors. Both girls who were voted onto the Board of Directors were leaders in the girls' groups that spearheaded IDEI's advocacy initiative. They are the first girls in Guatemala to be elected to serve on a town Board of Directors.

## **Challenges**

While IDEI has had great success in the municipality of Concepción Chiquirichapa, advocacy has been more challenging in San Miguel Sigüilá, an ultra-conservative community that is much less receptive to implementing girl-friendly public policies. Local authorities justify their unwillingness to implement girl-friendly policies by arguing that improvements in the municipality's infrastructure are for the benefit of all youth who inevitably use the newly built roads or parks for recreation. In addition, San Miguel manages a smaller budget than Concepción and municipal authorities there contend that other priorities in the town take precedence in the face of such limited resources.

To address these challenges, IDEI's network of 50 girls in San Miguel has taken several actions to build public support for IDEI's advocacy efforts. Their actions have included staging a public march in support of the proposed public policy in San Miguel and meeting with the local authorities, Community Development Councils, and the Municipal Development Councils, as well as utilizing organizational influence in the community to reach out to the mayor. Although municipal authorities did not approve increased budgetary allocations in San Miguel, these strategies convinced the mayor to sign the public policies developed by IDEI into law, and to assigned personnel to follow up on their implementation.

## **Lessons Learned**

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

In addition, convening a broad base of allies, including NGO's, community-based organizations and government institutions has been invaluable to the success of the initiative in both municipalities. These allies include the Ministry of Health and the local Health Center, the Ministry of Education, and the national Social Welfare Department. In Concepción, the alliance with the Municipal Office of Women has been particularly important due to shared policy concerns between that office and the new Office of Childhood and Adolescence, which was established in Concepción as a result of IDEI's successful budgetary advocacy. Engaging local schools has also proven an effective way to build support and disseminate the new public policies to both students and their parents.

Finally, the political mapping and advocacy strategy planning tools that Juany Garcia Perez learned as an AGALI Fellow have proven central to IDEI's planning process. One of the initial phases of advocacy planning is the analysis of potential allies and opponents, a tactic that helped IDEI garner the public support necessary to achieve success. In addition, Juany cites the community consultations as a major key to the advocacy success, enabling the girls to identify the issues facing their communities and develop girl-friendly solutions. IDEI utilized these direct community consultations along with other municipal-level diagnostic tools to establish a critical baseline from which to advocate for the public policies that address the needs of adolescent girls.

### Looking Ahead

Building on the success of their girl-led advocacy strategy, IDEI has begun to work in neighboring municipalities to implement similar advocacy initiatives. With support from AGALI, IDEI acquired additional funding to monitor implementation of the initial strategy, while expanding the advocacy initiative to the two neighboring municipalities of San Martín Sacatepéquez and Santa Cruz Cajolá. IDEI has already begun empowering groups of adolescent girls in those two new municipalities while advocating for the effective implementation of the established public policies in Concepción. IDEI continues to advocate with the municipal authorities in San Miguel Sigüilá to ensure that they follow Concepción's lead and allocate the necessary budgets to implement girl-friendly policies there.



In collaboration with AGALI, IDEI has worked to guarantee that the new public policies developed continue to be implemented after the September, 2011 national elections. To ensure that policymakers remained committed to implementing these new policies following the election, IDEI and the girl advocates in participating towns held media roundtables with potential mayoral candidates to discuss their positions on public policies affecting adolescent girls. After the elections, IDEI worked with the newly-elected officials to ensure their support for the implementation of girl-friendly policies.

Most importantly, IDEI continues to empower indigenous girls to play an active role in shaping their communities, advocating for their own needs, and speaking out on issues that affect them. Through the implementation of advocacy strategies that allow marginalized adolescent girls to engage effectively with local authorities, IDEI and AGALI are demonstrating that the power to create a more peaceful and equitable society rests in the hands of Guatemala's adolescent girls.

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## ADVOCACY CASE STUDY: HOPE AND THINK IN LIBERIA

### Background

During Liberia's 14-year civil conflict, up to 90% of girls and women were victims of physical or sexual violence, and more than one third of the country's population was displaced (Jones, 2008). Nearly a decade after the war ended in 2003, rape and domestic violence remain pervasive and adolescent girls suffer the brunt of these human rights violations. The obstacles facing girls are enormous – access to education is limited, child labor is commonplace, and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital cutting are widespread (Fofana, 2012; Plan International, 2009). Although Liberia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, it never passed a national law guaranteeing children the right to education, healthcare, or protection from violence.



*Residents of THINK's safe home for girls  
Monrovia, Liberia*

### The Children's Act

In 2007, Liberia's House of Representatives took a significant step towards addressing the needs of Liberian children by drafting and passing the Children's Act, a landmark bill designed to secure children's rights to education, healthcare, and inheritance, among other provisions. Although this important step brought hope to child rights advocates, the bill sat in the Senate for three years without being passed. During this time, advocates worked furiously for the Act's passage but met sustained resistance from policymakers. Citing fears of Western indoctrination, Senators refused to pass the Act, believing that it would trample upon parents' rights to make decisions about the welfare of their children.

Finally, after a year of renewed advocacy efforts by civil society groups and youth advocates, the Liberian Senate passed the Children's Act on September 15, 2011. The Act became one of the most comprehensive pieces of children's rights legislation enacted in Africa, representing a monumental step forward for adolescent girls in Liberia. For the first time in the country's history, every Liberian child was guaranteed rights, in accordance

### **The Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative (AGALI)**

improves adolescent girls' health, education, and economic security by strengthening advocacy efforts and leadership capacity in Latin America and Africa. Through intensive capacity building, grant-making, and technical assistance, AGALI improves socio-economic and educational opportunities for adolescent girls, increases girls' access to quality health services, and empowers young women to advocate for policies and programs that respond to their own needs. This case study highlights the collaborative advocacy work of AGALI grantee organizations Helping Our People Excel (HOPE) and Touching Humanity In Need of Kindness (THINK) in Liberia.

with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And although the Liberian Children’s Law includes all young people, it also specifically addresses many problems that disproportionately affect girls, including limited access to education, widespread sexual exploitation, and harmful traditional practices.

This case study examines how two grassroots organizations, Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK) and Helping our People Excel (HOPE), collaborated to secure passage of the Children’s Act and trained adolescent girls to advocate for their rights. THINK and HOPE’s advocacy strategy reveals the power in partnerships and direct dialogue, and in empowering young people to advocate for their own needs.

### **Partnership Formation**

Rosana Schaack, Executive Director of THINK, and Aisha Cooper Bruce, Program Director for Social Empowerment at HOPE, decided to work together when they were selected to participate in the Adolescent Girls’ Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI) in June 2010. The two leaders formed part of Liberia’s first cohort of AGALI Fellows, participating in the program’s weeklong training workshop, which included sessions on political mapping, advocacy strategy development, and resource mobilization. During the AGALI training, the leaders of HOPE and THINK realized that they had a complementary interest in advocating for the passage of the Children’s Act. THINK had already been working on adolescent girls’ health for many years and was an active member of the Child Protection Network (CPN), which had been working to pass the Children’s Act since 2007. Meanwhile, HOPE had been working on adolescent girls’ empowerment and brought expertise in communications strategy, message development, and youth empowerment to the partnership.

*“The level of technical assistance and support that the AGALI team provided was really helpful and way beyond our experiences with other projects.”*

*--Aisha Cooper Bruce,  
Program Director for Social Empowerment, HOPE*

During the workshop, Rosana and Aisha examined existing obstacles impeding successful passage of the Children’s Act, as well as their organizations’ collective strengths and weaknesses. Through this analysis, they realized that leveraging one another’s expertise to launch a joint strategy would maximize their chances of successfully advocating for passage of the Children’s Act. HOPE planned to focus on Section 21 of the Children’s Act, which ensured girls’ equal opportunity to participate in children’s rights clubs and other forums for free expression, and THINK’s advocacy sought to prevent child pornography, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence through a focus on Section 26 of the Act. Despite their differing focus areas, Rosana and Aisha felt that they could enhance their individual advocacy efforts by leveraging each other’s strengths, networks, and expertise. They submitted a joint proposal to the AGALI program and were selected to receive seed funding to implement their advocacy project for the passage of the Children’s Act.

### **Partnerships, Policymaker Education and Youth Engagement**

With AGALI funding and technical support, HOPE and THINK adopted a multi-faceted advocacy approach, which included partnering with government ministries, dialoguing with senators, engaging with existing networks, training adolescent girls and youth activists, and using the media to raise community awareness. From the outset, the two organizations knew that it would be essential to launch their strategy as members of the Child Protection Network, since the network had already been advocating for the passage of the Children’s Act for several years. Understanding the importance of strategic partnerships, HOPE and THINK actively participated in the CPN and collaborated with UNICEF Liberia and the Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development on a variety of advocacy activities.

Aisha and Rosana also built the capacity of the Children’s Parliament, the highest advocacy and representative body for children in Liberia. Two representatives from the Children’s Parliament and two adolescent girls from local girls’ clubs were selected from each of Liberia’s 15 counties to participate in the training. Aisha and Rosana trained over 70 adolescent girls and youth activists on children’s rights, and gave them the tools they needed to advocate on their own behalf. These young people became an integral part of the advocacy campaign, going directly to the Senate to advocate for passage of the Children’s Act.

Another crucial component of the advocacy strategy was direct dialogue with Senators, which Aisha and Rosana noted was a strategy that they learned during the AGALI training. Representatives from THINK and HOPE held individual meetings with all of the Senators to educate them about the Act and clarify any misunderstandings. For the six weeks leading up to the vote, members of the Children’s Parliament organized Capitol Hill meetings and marches during every Senate session to encourage Senators to finally pass the bill. These efforts to engage in constructive dialogue with decision-makers and address any misconceptions about the Act were critical to its eventual passage.

### Challenges

Implementing the Children’s Act advocacy strategy during an election year posed significant challenges to THINK and HOPE’s advocacy efforts. Holding meetings with Senators was difficult, as they were often away from their offices campaigning for reelection. Many Senators did not see the passage of the Children’s Act as something that their constituents highly valued and were more focused on issues they felt would help their reelection campaigns.

*“We thought that the senators were unapproachable until we understood the true meaning of advocacy. We had thought that it meant just going and demonstrating or getting people to demonstrate, but we learned [that it] involves dialogue; it is another way.”*

*--Rosana Schaack,  
Executive Director of THINK*



*Children’s Act advocates with a member of the Liberian Senate*

Working within the Child Protection Network afforded HOPE and THINK the opportunity to extend their reach throughout the country, but also required the organizations to modify some components of their own advocacy strategies. The two organizations had originally included media advocacy as a major component of their strategy but the CPN wanted to focus on individual consultations with Senators rather than use the media. Although cooperating with the CPN afforded HOPE and THINK less freedom to execute their own vision, Rosie and Aisha felt the benefits of this collaboration far outweighed the costs, as the group collectively had more power than the individual organizations working separately.

### Lessons Learned

Despite many frustrations during the advocacy campaign, including absentee Senators and the slow process of working in a network, Aisha and Rosana stayed focused on their goal. Even when certain Senators refused to meet with them, they continued to engage with their networks, partners, and the community, and persisted in setting up meetings with lawmakers. Their perseverance and patience helped them to stay positive during some of the more frustrating moments of the process.



*“You can advocate on behalf of someone, but if they can’t speak on the issue themselves and how it affects them, then at the end of the day, [your] advocacy will be lacking.”*

*--Aisha Cooper Bruce,  
Program Director for Social Empowerment HOPE*

Flexibility was also essential to these organizations’ success. As unexpected changes arose, Rosie and Aisha adjusted their advocacy strategy as needed in order to achieve policy change. On several occasions, situations did not unfold according to plan, such as when the CPN’s decision altered HOPE and THINK’s media engagement strategy. Being flexible in their programmatic approach helped THINK and HOPE to achieve their ultimate advocacy goal.

Finally, empowering adolescent girls and youth activists to advocate on their own behalf was an essential component of Aisha and Rosie’s advocacy strategy. The young people who were trained by HOPE and THINK demonstrated to the Senators their own dedication and sophistication in articulating the need for the Children’s Act, and this direct advocacy was critical to securing the votes needed to ensure the Act’s passage.



*A girl advocate presenting the Children’s Act Decree to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*



*Aisha Cooper Bruce and Rosana Schaack*



*Adolescent girl in Liberia*

## Looking Ahead

After three years of struggle, the Senate passed the Children’s Act on September 15, the last day of the 2011 legislative session. After celebrating this national victory, HOPE and THINK began to advocate for full implementation of the Children’s Law. The two organizations are continuing to partner in ensuring girl-friendly implementation of key sections of the new law.

THINK and HOPE are now working together with additional partners in the Child Protection Network to coordinate key stakeholder meetings with government agencies. In these meetings, they seek to secure policymakers’ commitments to develop the policies, programs and funding needed to ensure full implementation of the Children’s Law. The two organizations are also creating an abridged version of the Law for wider distribution, thereby increasing public awareness and involvement in ensuring effective implementation. Using this simplified law and key messaging, they are educating the public about the law via media campaigns and public forums. HOPE and THINK are also collaborating to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy to assess the law’s implementation and to track progress made in mainstreaming adolescent girls’ issues in Liberian law and policy.

THINK and HOPE’s continued dedication to adolescent girls, along with the joint advocacy of their partners and over 70 inspiring youth advocates, was crucial to the Children’s Act’s passage. Through the tireless work of these inspiring advocates, more than 600,000 adolescent girls in Liberia can expect a future in which their rights are respected and they can participate fully in the reconstruction and development of their country.

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ATTACHMENT G

# POLICY IN BRIEF LIBERIA



## THE CHILDREN'S LAW

### Summary of Sections that Most Apply to Adolescent Girls

In 2011, the Liberian Senate passed the Children's Act of 2011, and in 2012 the President signed it into law. This policy brief summarizes the sections of the law that are most relevant to adolescent girls.

### OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Article II, Section 4 stipulates that all decisions and actions that affect children (defined as those who are under 18 years of age) must take their best interests into consideration. Section 5 also ensures that no decision or action can be taken that discriminates against a child on the basis of sex, family, color, race, ethnicity, and a number of other dimensions.

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS

Article III lays out a "Bill of Rights for Children," which includes the following provisions (among others):

- **Basic rights:** The rights to: an adequate standard of living; education (including free, compulsory primary education); adequate food, water, housing, and clothing; access to medically necessary health care; participate in cultural activities that are in the child's best interests; and leisure, play, and recreation.
- **Rights of expression and religion:** Rights of expression, access to information, freedom of thought and religion, and freedom of association.
- **Rights of inheritance:** The right to benefit from an inheritance left by a child's parents. (No guardian, caregiver, executor of a will, or other such person can dispossess a child of her inheritance.)
- **Protection from harmful work:** The right to be protected from work and other practices that may threaten a child's health or development.
- **Protection from sexual abuse:** The right to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation, including prostitution and pornography.
- **Protection from involvement in violent conflicts:** The right to be protected from involvement in or recruitment for armed or otherwise violent conflicts.

Article VI, Section 38 and Article VII, Section 45 offer the following additional protections:

- **Marriage protections:** Children under age 18 cannot enter into marriage. Additionally, they cannot be betrothed into marriage or promised for marriage.
- **Other work protections:** Children cannot be given over to work in order to satisfy a parent's obligations (regardless of whether or not the work is harmful).
- **Protections from cruel treatment:** Children cannot be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

- **Protections from other harmful practices:** Children cannot be subjected to unnecessary practices that may cause physical or psychological pain to the child, or violate her health, dignity, education, or development.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEES AND CHILDREN'S REPRESENTATIVE FORUMS

Article XI calls for two types of local bodies to be created:

- A child welfare committee, to be established at the community or town level. (Article XI, Sections 79-85)
- A children's representative forum, to be established at the town, district, and county levels. (Article XI, Sections 96-99)

### CARETAKER RESPONSIBILITIES

Article VI, Section 28 states that parents and caretakers must comply with the following provisions (among others):

- **Raise children with equal dignity** regardless of their sex.
- **Refrain from administering domestic discipline** that violates a child's dignity or adversely affects her physical or psychosocial well-being.
- **Refrain from perpetrating violence** in the household where a child lives.

If any of these tenets are violated, a local child welfare committee may summon the parent and make recommendations to safeguard the child's best interests.

**Every community or town must establish a child welfare committee to advance children's rights.** The committee must include a traditional leader, a man and woman representing parents, a female child, a male child, two representatives of organizations in the community, and three other local members from a variety of religious faiths. The committee's responsibilities include making recommendations to public officials to eliminate harmful practices and prevent domestic violence through awareness and educational activities. When such recommendations are presented, the local government authority or service provider must respond promptly. If they do not, the child welfare committee can refer matters to higher authorities. Additionally, each town, district, and county must establish a separate children's representative forum, composed of boys and girls elected by their communities, in order to ensure that children's and young people's views are heard and acted upon.

### NATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Throughout the law, a number of agencies are assigned responsibilities, as listed below.

*The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare must:*

- Ensure reproductive health service delivery through clinics,



hospitals, and other centers. (Article III, Section 13.3)

- Ensure that parents meet material and other needs for the well-being of their children, and provide assistance to parents who fail to do so. (Article III, Section 17.2)
- Provide rehabilitative measures to reintegrate abused or exploited children. This must include community counseling and other forms of psychosocial support. (Article VII, Section 48)
- Take measures to ensure children's increased access to adequate food and water; decreased malnutrition, illnesses, and child and parental deaths; and consistent access to housing conditions that are safe, healthy, clean, and appropriate for children. (Article III, Sections 13.2 and 16.2)
- Develop and implement policies and programs that address the effects of situations that leave children in particularly vulnerable positions. (Article VII, Section 41.1)
- Children who are in vulnerable positions include, for example, those who are involved in commercial sex work are exposed to domestic violence; have been sexually abused; have escaped from pressure to undergo an initiation ceremony or other harmful practice; are pregnant; live in child-headed households; have been given by parents or guardians to work for a relative or on a farm; have been treated poorly by a parent or guardian; have no home; or are displaced as a result of war, civil disturbance or natural disasters. (Article VII, Section 39)

*The Ministry of Education must:*

- Encourage children's enrollment and re-enrollment into school (or into alternative forms of education for children who have dropped out of school). (Article III, Section 14.3)
- Take special measures to ensure equal access to education for female and disadvantaged children. (Article III, Section 14.7)
- Ensure that teacher training curricula include instructions regarding teaching child rights. (Article III, Section 21.3)

*The Ministry of Gender and Development must:*

- Coordinate services focusing on parental skills (including disciplining without violence), mother support groups, community day care centers, and other strategies that ease parents' child care burdens. (Article V, Section 33 and Article 7, Section 45.4)
- Address the causes that leave children in particularly vulnerable situations (as described above). (Article VII, Section 40)
- Assist town and community leaders to establish local child welfare committees, as described above. (Article XI, Section 99.1)
- Manage a Child Rights Advancement Fund (Article XI, Section 77) and chair a Child Rights Education Committee (Article XI, Section 78.2)

## LOCAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Local agencies and individuals have the following responsibilities.

*Schools and local authorities must:*

- Ensure that child rights education extends to parents, through the participation of local school committees and civil society organizations. (Article III, Section 21.4)
- Facilitate the formation of children's rights clubs in schools.

(Article III, Section 21.2)

*The Police must:*

- Investigate and handle cases of sexual violence, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and other cases that require police protection for women or children. (Article XI, Section 100.1)
- Maintain police units to protect women and children that (Article XI, Section 100.2):
  - Maintain updated registers of convicted child abusers and offenders (which will contribute to the national register).
  - Monitor the whereabouts of registered child abusers.
  - Make arrangements to prosecute cases of domestic violence and other violence against children.
  - Provide temporary safe places for women or children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering violence, exploitation, or abuse.

*Child protection officers must (Article VII, Sections 49, 50, and 51):*

- Not tolerate any form of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect.
- Not discriminate against any child on the basis of sex, family, color, race, ethnicity, or other dimensions.
- Assess and respond to risks that may make a child vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, or neglect.
- Work to prevent and respond to child exploitation and abuse, and to promote rehabilitation and reintegration.
- Avoid touching, fondling, rubbing, or having other inappropriate physical contact with children, and refrain from engaging in sexual acts or activities with children.
- Report concerns of child abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Refrain from using language that may harass, abuse, sexually provoke, or demean children.
- Refrain from engaging in or accepting bribes or significant gifts in relation to child protection services.

*Directors of alternative care institutions must:*

- Prescribe guidelines to protect children's privacy and confidentiality, including gender-sensitive protections when children interact with other children of the opposite sex. (Article X, Sub-article II, Section 65.4)
- Oversee procedures for meeting the health needs of every child in the institution. This includes access to medical, dental, and nursing care, as well as care specific to a child's individual needs, including her sexual health, gender-specific personal hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and counseling and rehabilitation for children who have been abused, neglected, or exploited. (Article X, Sub-article II, Section 65.6)
- Prevent any kind of abuse, neglect or exploitation from occurring within the institution, and ensure that if such harm occurs, the institution provides an effective response. Alternative care institutions must also prohibit and take steps to stop bullying. (Article X, Sub-article II, Section 68)

**FOR A COPY OF THE CHILDREN'S LAW AND RELATED RESOURCES PLEASE VISIT:**

Ministry of Gender and Development: UN Drive and Gurley Streets, P.O. Box 10-1375, Monrovia, Liberia

**ABOUT AGALI**

***The Adolescent Girls' Advocacy & Leadership Initiative*** AGALI improves adolescent girls' health, education, and livelihoods by enhancing the capacity of Latin American and African leaders to advocate for policies, programs, and funding benefitting girls.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [www.agaliprogram.org](http://www.agaliprogram.org)**



[WWW.AGALIPROGRAM.ORG](http://WWW.AGALIPROGRAM.ORG)



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