

CREATING
POWER
BUILDING





A LETTER FROM RISE UP'S CO-FOUNDERS BUILDING POWER, CREATING JOY

The Rise Up Team at our Global Planning Retreat, October 2024.



Dear Friends and Champions of Change,

2024 marked Rise Up's 15th anniversary of creating lasting change — a milestone year for Rise Up Leaders who **transformed the lives of more than 25 million people globally**, improving health, education, and economic opportunities for girls, women, and gender-nonconforming people. With the unwavering generosity of our partners, **we invested in 98 extraordinary new leaders** and **supported them to successfully advocate for 10 new and improved laws and policies** across the U.S., India, Nigeria, Brazil, and Mexico. As a vital intermediary in our sector, **Rise Up invested over \$680,000 in direct grants and field-building support to advance gender equity and justice worldwide.**

At Rise Up, we know that **building power** is about more than policy change — it's about shifting resources, amplifying voices, and ensuring that those most affected by injustice lead the solutions. And with power comes something just as transformative: **joy**. The joy of a girl finishing school, a woman accessing the health care she needs, and a future where gender justice is not just an aspiration, but a reality — where girls in STEM programs receive the same mentorship opportunities as boys, where the gender wage gap vanishes, and where LGBTQ+ youth feel safe everywhere they go.

Building on our successes in 2024, Rise Up is embarking on an exciting new chapter. After 15 years of fiscal sponsorship, **we are stepping into our own power to become an independent nonprofit** — strengthening our capacity for innovation and efficacy to deepen our impact for the communities we serve. This transition builds on the strong foundation we've created in partnership with the Public Health Institute since our founding in 2009 and positions us to deliver on our transformative mission with even greater momentum in the coming years.

As we look to the future and establish ourselves as an independent organization, **Rise Up Leaders, our generous funding partners, and programmatic allies will continue to be the fuel that powers our mission.** We are grateful for the continued collaboration of all our supporters, and we invite you to deepen your engagement with us as we evolve in the coming year. Together, we can continue building power, creating joy, and driving lasting change toward a gender-just world.

With joy, determination, and gratitude,

Dr. Denise Raquel Dunning and Josie Ramos, Rise Up Co-founders

RISE UP AT A GLANCE

MISSION

Rise Up partners with women, girls, and allies who are transforming their communities and countries as part of a global movement for justice and equity. We build power with these local leaders as they work for equity in education, health, and economic opportunity to create a better future for all.



In 2024, we built power with **98** Rise Up Leaders, expanding our total global network to **980** alumni.

Rise Up Leaders successfully advocated for **10** new and improved laws, policies, and programs, impacting more than **25M** people around the world.



We invested over **\$680,000** in direct grants and field-building support to tackle critical challenges affecting women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people across the globe.

ENSURING THAT MILLIONS OF GIRLS IN INDIA CAN FINISH SCHOOL



Rise Up Leaders at our Leadership Accelerator in Rajasthan, 2021.

Growing up in Rajasthan, India, Rise Up Leader Poonam Jonwal saw firsthand how girls' futures were often cut short — by early marriage, harassment, and above all, by the simple denial of an education. As one of five sisters in a large family, she witnessed the barriers girls faced to stay in school. "I realized that education is the key for girls to escape social evils," Poonam told Rise Up. "But I wasn't ready to lead yet — I was hesitant, unsure how to step into a leadership role."

That reluctance changed when Poonam joined Rise Up's Leadership Accelerator. Selected through a rigorous process, she gained new tools — policy analysis, advocacy strategy development, leadership skills, project design, and more. With Rise Up's funding and support, Poonam developed a strategic plan to **solve a major obstacle keeping girls out of the classroom: school fees**. Although free education for all children in India is guaranteed by law, school fees often prevent girls from finishing school.



*Rise Up Leader
Poonam Jonwal.*

Poonam worked tirelessly to ensure that girls could complete their education.

Through coordination with key stakeholders, she led efforts to establish a statewide education complaints board to resolve issues affecting students' access to quality education. This government-mandated body is made up of child rights officials, government representatives, parents, teachers, and community representatives — all tasked with investigating challenges facing students and families such as illegal school fees, poor sanitation, and gender discrimination, and taking concrete actions to fix them.

Because of Poonam's efforts, nearly 10 million students across Rajasthan can now attend school and receive the education they deserve.

This model doesn't just remove barriers to education — **it puts girls at the center of change**. Through Poonam's leadership, girls are now active members of School Management Committees, effectively advocating for clean and safe bathrooms, regular sanitary pad distribution, better sports facilities, and more women teachers.

Today, Poonam leads statewide efforts to drive systemic change and ensure all students' access to quality education. "I made sure girls weren't just beneficiaries — they became decision-makers," she explained. "Because of Rise Up, I am no longer hesitant. I am a leader — and I am strengthening the system for girls."

**Quotes translated from Hindi.*

“Rise Up taught me how to identify problems, create a roadmap, build alliances, and achieve measurable results.”

IMPROVING SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR 13 MILLION WOMEN IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL



From L-R Rise Up Leaders Fernanda Martins, Marília Moreira, and Renata Guadagnin.

In Brazil, a woman is assaulted every six minutes ([The Guardian](#)). Three Rise Up Leaders united to transform the devastating increase in gender-based violence for women in São Paulo. With training and funding from Rise Up, Marília Moreira, Fernanda Martins, and Renata Guadagnin came together to stand up for **survivors of gender-based violence**.

“Violence against women is a global public health crisis because its effects go beyond the individual or domestic sphere, overwhelming health care systems and perpetuating cycles of poverty, exclusion,

and gender inequality,” explained the team, highlighting that Brazil is among the top five countries globally for femicides.

Leveraging their complementary skillsets and expertise, Marília, Fernanda, and Renata created an ambitious joint advocacy strategy to create large-scale impact. “We understood that collective advocacy would strengthen our proposal and increase our chances of success.”

Engaging survivors and community members, the leaders developed São Paulo’s Unified Protocol for Communication and Assistance to Women Victims of Violence. This landmark legislation ensures that women in violent situations receive coordinated care and services, reduces the risk of re-victimization, and improves data collection to inform better public policy. **In August 2024, government leaders signed the new protocol, positively impacting the lives of 13 million women in São Paulo.**

“Learning new ways to look at and objectively solve problems that affect girls and women was one of the highlights of the Rise Up experience,” shared Fernanda. “The methodology, with its clear and well-defined strategies, significantly broadened my understanding of how to actively confront political and social challenges using practical tools.”

The three leaders are now working to expand their success nationally to transform how Brazil responds to gender-based violence and urge the country to recognize it as a public health priority. “Despite the inequalities and injustices, being connected in a network with others — especially women — who fight together, believing that **these are collective struggles** and that **only through unity can we build equity**, is what keeps us inspired and motivated to continue.”

“Learning new ways to look at and objectively solve problems that affect girls and women was one of the highlights of the Rise Up experience.”

**Quotes edited for brevity.*

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL LITERACY DIVIDE FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN NIGERIA

In a world increasingly shaped by technology, Rise Up Leader Franklin Pyokpung Zaure saw that adolescent girls in rural communities in Nigeria were being left behind, unable to gain the digital skills needed to thrive. “For women and girls in my community, digital literacy is empowering and opens doors to economic opportunities by equipping them with essential skills,” Franklin said. “Digital literacy enables women and girls to overcome barriers like mobility constraints and societal norms, fostering inclusion in digital economies.”



Rise Up Leader
Franklin Pyokpung Zaure.

Determined to create a brighter future for marginalized girls, **Franklin brought digital literacy and skills training to nearly 362,000 rural girls and women across Kaduna State** by expanding the Kaduna Digital Incubation Program (KAD-DIP), with Rise Up’s funding and support.

Originally established by the government, the Digital Incubation Program was intended to equip girls with vital digital skills, but Franklin quickly realized that the program was not reaching those who needed it most — adolescent girls in remote and underserved areas. Through his organization, the Creative Arts for Development Center, Franklin led efforts to extend the Digital Incubation Program’s reach to rural communities, **opening up new opportunities for girls who had long been excluded from digital spaces**. By equipping rural girls with access to affordable tech devices and providing them with training to develop digital skills and market their products online, **Franklin is creating pathways to economic mobility for girls that were previously out of reach**.

“The transformative support provided by Rise Up, ranging from comprehensive training and strategic guidance to network and financial resources, made it possible for me to craft effective plans and build the confidence to drive meaningful changes in my community,” Franklin said.

By giving adolescent girls the tools to build their digital literacy, Franklin is **bridging the digital gender divide, opening doors to education, employment, and leadership** that will transform entire communities for generations to come.

“The transformative support provided by Rise Up, ranging from comprehensive training and strategic guidance to network and financial resources, made it possible for me to craft effective plans and build the confidence to drive meaningful changes in my community.”

BUILDING POWER FOR GENDER JUSTICE ACROSS CALIFORNIA



Rise Up Leader Tumani Drew (L) with Olivia Scott, Corporate Responsibility Manager at Cummins Inc. (R).

Rise Up is expanding our work in the U.S. by fueling bold, community-led change in California. **In 2024, 24 California-based leaders joined our Leadership and Advocacy Accelerator, where they developed powerful strategies to advance gender equity state-wide.**

Following the training, **Rise Up awarded over \$500,000 in grant funding to six transformative projects** to improve health, education, and economic outcomes across California. These initiatives tackle a wide range of challenges — such as improving Black maternal and newborn health outcomes, promoting economic mobility for families, developing solutions to address homelessness, and ensuring that LGBTQ+ youth are safe in school. Each project is led by Rise Up Leaders who are closest to the issues in their own communities and best positioned to drive meaningful change.

Our funding partners are a vital part of this work. Olivia Scott, Corporate Responsibility Manager at Cummins Inc., joined the Accelerator to gain a deeper understanding of Rise Up's Leaders, team, and curriculum.

"As a participant, I became a collaborator, supporter, and ultimately a friend to the members of this cohort," Olivia shared. "I transitioned from a big-picture funder to someone linked in arms on a shared journey to create a better future." Together, we're building a more equitable California — led by those driving lasting change in their communities.



Rise Up Leaders at our Leadership & Advocacy Accelerator in California, September 2024.

“I transitioned from a big-picture funder to someone linked in arms on a shared journey to create a better future.”

MEETING URGENT NEEDS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

“Women are often left out of flood preparedness and response planning, meaning their needs such as reproductive health services and gender-separated shelters are often overlooked.”



Rise Up Leader Anastesia Ezeolisa.

Climate crises have disproportionate impacts on women and girls around the world. **As climate-related disasters intensify globally, Rise Up Leaders are developing innovative solutions to address the environmental threats facing women and girls.** From flooded schools to health centers lost to wildfires to rising rates of gender-based violence, climate challenges demand urgent, gender-responsive solutions. Rise Up Leaders are meeting this moment, advocating for gender-inclusive policies, strengthening local systems, and ensuring the most affected communities are not left behind.

One powerful example comes out of Nigeria. **Rise Up Leader Anastesia Ezeolisa** is advocating for legislation to protect women and girls in Anambra state from the gendered impacts of annual flooding and other climate disasters. “Women are often left out of flood preparedness and response planning, meaning their needs such as reproductive health services and gender-separated shelters are often overlooked,” explained Anastesia.

With Rise Up’s funding, coaching, and support, Anastesia’s advocacy will strengthen the state’s implementation of gender-sensitive emergency response policies to **protect more than 1 million people** and ensure sustainable economic recovery for affected women and girls. This systemic change will foster resilience and center the needs of the most vulnerable women and girls in Anambra State. **By supporting leaders like Anastesia, Rise Up is strengthening resilience and equity where it’s needed most — enabling communities around the world to thrive despite growing environmental uncertainty.**



RISE UP IN THE NEWS

Alliance

For philanthropy and social investment worldwide

“Local leaders have the solutions: Why aren’t we funding them?”

Alliance magazine highlighted Rise Up’s research on how funders can better support community-driven solutions, addressing the stark reality that only **2 percent** of global funding reaches local leaders and organizations who are creating change in their own communities. Co-authored by Rise Up’s Executive Director Dr. Denise R. Dunning, Director of Learning Josie Ramos, and Rise Up Leader Alejandra García Muñiz, the article features insights from the [2022 external evaluation](#) conducted by Dalberg Advisors, which drew on research with 220 Rise Up Leaders in 14 countries to identify concrete strategies for how philanthropy can better support local leaders and organizations.

Industry Week

“We’re Women Leaders Answering the Call for Investments in Girls”

On International Day of the Girl (October 11), Rise Up’s Executive Director Dr. Denise R. Dunning co-authored a powerful op-ed with Cummins Inc. Chair and CEO Jennifer Rumsey in *Industry Week* calling on business, philanthropic, and nonprofit leaders to increase investments in girls.

East Bay

“Women helping women succeed”

East Bay Magazine featured Rise Up’s impactful work in California, spotlighting Oakland-based Rise Up Leader Sadia Khan and her organization, the Family Violence Law Center. Sadia is standing up for the rights of youth in California by addressing the often-overlooked issue of early and forced marriage — an urgent problem affecting an estimated 9,000 young people annually across the state. Through survivor-centered research and policy advocacy, she is working to establish a statewide ban on child marriage.



THANK YOU

Rise Up's work is made possible through the critical support of our generous donors. Through these powerful philanthropic partnerships, we are able to innovate, reach more women, girls, and allies, and advocate for systemic change that benefits millions of people around the world.

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS



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Up's Leadership Council.



RISE UP'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Leadership Council members at our annual Evening of Impact.



Rise Up's Leadership Council is a dynamic and collaborative network of gender justice champions who share our vision for a more just and equitable world.

With members hailing from diverse backgrounds in the corporate, philanthropic, and social impact sectors, Leadership Council members are united by a shared dedication to advancing gender equity in the U.S. and globally. **Our members provide strategic guidance to Rise Up, form part of our active learning community, and play a pivotal role in raising critical funds to support women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people all over the world.**

We are deeply grateful for the Leadership Council's ongoing partnership and steadfast commitment to our work and leaders, and we look forward to continuing to grow this influential network of engaged supporters.

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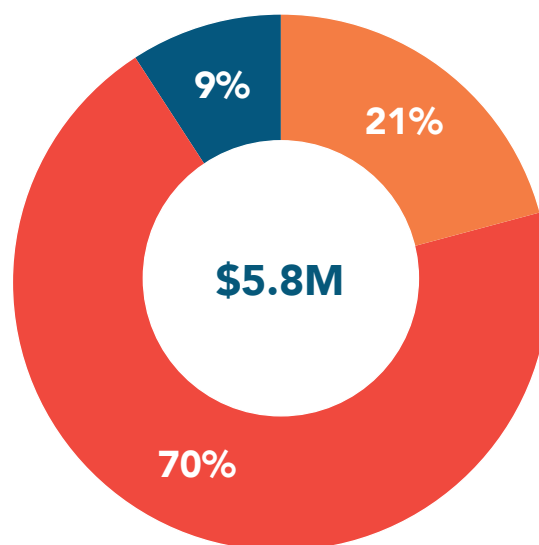
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2024 FINANCIALS

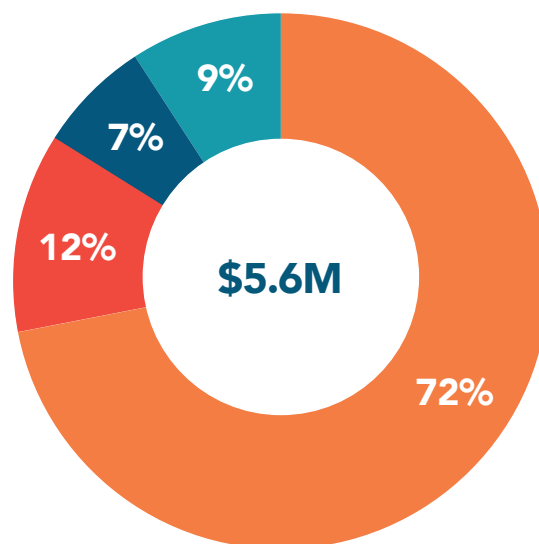
TOTAL REVENUE

- Foundation
- Corporate
- Individual



TOTAL EXPENSES

- Programs & Communications
- Grantmaking
- Operating
- Fundraising



* Rise Up received a generous gift from MacKenzie Scott in 2021, which we continue to leverage to support our work.



Rise Up works to advance gender equity and justice in education, health, and economic opportunity by partnering with visionary local leaders around the world. Rise Up builds power with women, girls, and their allies by providing training, funding, and connection to a global network to create meaningful, lasting change. Rise Up works with leaders and organizations in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the United States to create a future where all people can thrive.

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Rise Up is based at the Public Health Institute, a leader in global health and development for over 50 years.