



*Girls learn about their rights to an education—not labor—at a child forum.*

## ***Your Contributions at Work***

### ***FINAL REPORT on the **Because I am a Girl** Project in India***

#### ***Combating Child Labor in Andhra Pradesh (April 2012 - June 2014)***

For the past three years, your support has been building a foundation in communities for girls in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India, a country with more child laborers than anywhere else in the world. In this region, child labor affects girls far more than boys—but your support is changing the landscape for girls and their families, who often feel they have no choice but to send their children to work.

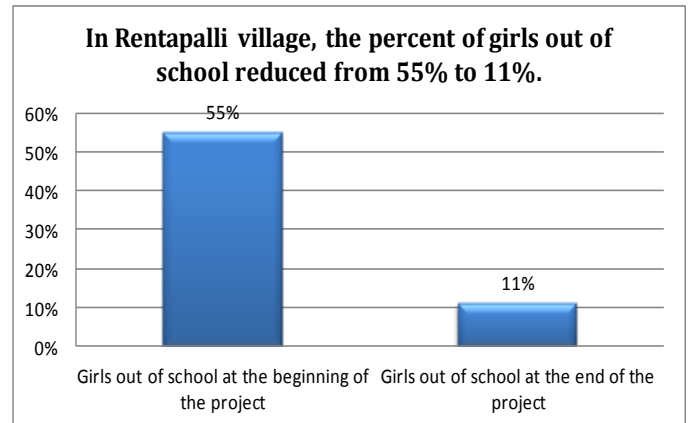
Your contributions have helped build a vibrant and comprehensive support network made up of government leaders, labor union members, and families who, by working together, are changing the cultural attitudes about child labor. Strengthening and boosting the education system and keeping girls and boys safely in school is the most effective way to prevent child labor. Vocational training also provides youth with stable and productive alternatives and opportunities.

Child forums, like the one pictured above, are critical to strengthening girls' leadership and participation skills so that they can truly create change for the better in their own lives and communities. Your gifts take girls out of the labor market and puts them back on the path to learning. In school, children can be children. They can live out their childhoods in safe and supportive learning environments and fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

Thank you for playing a critical role in preventing child labor in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

## Here's what you've made possible:

**13,000 girls and boys** in **596 child forums**,  
**407 children** in **vocational training**,  
**3,492 boys and girls** enrolled in **school**,  
**2,000 families** enrolled in **livelihood programs**,  
**50 government and union members** given anti-  
child-labor training



## How Child Forums and Child Protection Committees work



*Child forum members*

Over the past three years, more than 9,000 girls have participated in child forums to learn about their rights to an education and protection from labor, and their responsibilities as members of the community. Child forums create the safe spaces for girls to learn from each other and discuss important issues like child marriage and school dropout.

In addition, child forum representatives have the chance to speak out on children's issues to child protection committees, which are made up of local leaders and school and government officials. Child protection committees raise these issues with government and lobby for needed change. Last year, **307 child protection committees** were formed with **over 3,650 members**, and the committees successfully prevented multiple child marriages and advocated for new secondary schools and renovations on additional schools.

## What are girls saying about child forums?



*Girls lead an activity in a Child Forum in Narayankhet village.*

*"I am in 9th grade. Before, I didn't have any exposure to the outside world. After joining the child forum, I learned about child rights and many other things. These days, we girls are given more importance in our school, which makes me really proud."*

*"Through this project, I joined a child forum and learned about child rights. Now I can share about child rights with my friends in my school."*

- Child Forum members



## Advocating for girls can make a real difference

In the past two years, 58 meetings with over 2,500 government officials were organized and this interaction enabled child forum members to share their concerns about their school's infrastructure and condition. This year, these advocacy efforts resulted in **renovation of the flooring of 3 schools**, installation of a **functional drinking water** facility in a school, and construction of **8 additional kitchens** and **2 classrooms**.

Advocacy efforts enabled children, communities, duty bearers and civil society members to actively work towards creating a positive outlook for the development of girls in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

### Meet Bina and Geeta, two girls whose lives you've changed:



Bina

Bina is 15 years old and lives in Narayankhet. She dropped out of school several years ago because of her poor health. The 3-mile walk to her high school was too difficult when she was sick. When the child forum was formed in her village, she joined and began to learn that it was possible to go back to school. *"The Child Forum members came to my house and talked to my parents and convinced them to let me go back to school. They told me if anything happens not to worry, they'll take care of me and help me stay in school."*

Bina rejoined school in the 8th grade, and is currently in 10th grade. She's planning to continue her studies to become a doctor. *"Doctors need to be more sensitive to the needs of children,"* she says.

Geeta is 14 years old and lives in a remote village in Pullalucheruvu. Every year, she migrates with her mother and father between December and April to cut sugar cane. Due to this, she dropped out of school in the 4th grade because she was missing so much school. She joined the child forum in her village and was identified as needing support to return to school. *"My happiest day was when the community volunteer came to my house and told me she would help me get back in school"* Geeta shares.

With support from the community volunteer and the child forum, Geeta rejoined school in the 6th grade and stays with her uncle and grandfather when her parents migrate for work. She's now in the 8th grade. Geeta loves studying language, and she wants to be a teacher when she finishes her education. *"Teachers should try to encourage students,"* she says.



Geeta

## Girls Celebrate Child Rights Week



*A girl participant speaks to government leaders to advocate for girls' rights.*

Activities during Child Rights week encourage children, especially girls, to participate in celebrations and explore their talents. During the project period, over 8,500 children have actively participated in child rights week.

This year, World Against Child Labor Day was observed by over 5,000 people through 5 programs that organized activities and several rallies.

*"Celebration of the Child Rights Week was highly acknowledged and there were more child participants. This activity has motivated children from the village and schools and has supported child rights and child participation,"* shares the headmaster of a local high school.

## Sima explains how vocational training classes changed her life

Sima is 18 years old and lives in Narayankhet village. She dropped out of school in 6th grade to become a full-time beedi (cigarette) roller, tiring work that damages the fingers and eyes. Through the project, she was invited to join the vocational training classes where she learned how to sew blouses and Punjabi suits. *"Now the neighbors know that I can do all these things, and I get orders. This festival season for Diwali I was so busy! Everyone wanted new clothes,"* Sima shares.



*"I'm very happy that I finally decided to join the vocational training. At home I would feel very lonely, but when I came to the group I would be so happy to see everyone and talk to them. We would also learn different things, like how there are many health risks if a girl gets married too soon."*

Sima also learned that she could continue studying through the open school (distance learning program). She just finished open-school 10th grade, and is now studying for the next course. *"Because of me, some of the other girls have started the open school program too,"* Sima shares.

**Thank you for support! Your generous contributions have changed the lives of girls in India and given them the chance to spark change in their entire communities.**