

## THE GIRL ICON PROGRAM

### Stand UP, Raise Your Voice and Take Charge!

Milaan Foundation is a non-profit organization which envisions an inclusive and equal world, where every girl has the knowledge, skills, and social environment to pursue her dreams and explore her full potential.

Our **Misison 2030** will empower 10 million girls across India and build a movement of Girl Leaders with a thriving ecosystem of change-makers and networks. We define empowerment as a process of building one's awareness and capacity leading to greater participation, decision making power, control and transformative action.

### WHY ADOLESCENT GIRLS?

India is home to 120 million adolescent girls, about 10% of the population. Adolescent girls in developing countries spend less time in school than boys; perform a disproportionate share of domestic work; have less mobility outside the home and fewer acceptable public spaces for leisure activity; and claim fewer friends, mentors, and social outlets. (Levine et al. 2009) Girls' journey to adulthood is affected by lack of access to education and health, child marriage, gender-based violence and discrimination leaving them powerless and vulnerable. A NCPDR report states that around 39.4% of adolescent girls in the 15-18 age group are not attending any educational institution, and a vast majority — around 65%— of them are "either engaged in household activities, are dependents, or, are engaged in begging, etc."<sup>1</sup> The International Centre for Research on Women's report - Addressing Comprehensive Needs of Adolescents Girls in India – states that 47% of girls get married before the age of 18 years.

As an organization, we are protecting and empowering adolescent girls with the right skills, knowledge and information to take action to fight for a gender equal world, where they are respected, have equal access to opportunities, and are free from violence and discrimination.

### OUR SOLUTION

**The Girl Icon Program** empowers adolescent girls (between 12-18 years) through experiential life-skills based journey, enhancing their learning outcomes, confidence, communications, decision making, and social awareness, thus enabling girls to explore their potential. The program leverages a multi-pronged strategy to build and facilitate a groundswell movement of girl leaders and change-makers who will fight for a gender equal world.

As key strategic intervention of the Girl Icon program, we focus on 3 verticals:

1. Girl Icon Fellowship
2. Girl Icon Community Intervention
3. Strengthening Community Partner Organizations

**1. Girl Icon Fellowship :** It is a 2-year experiential leadership journey for adolescent girls with the passion and will to fight for their rights. Selected as Girl Icons, they mobilize peer groups comprising of 20 members each, work as peer educators to deliver life-skills curriculum every fortnight, undergo 20 days leadership training every 6 months and lead community action through social action projects.

**2. Girl Icon Community Intervention:** It is a one-year intervention with adolescent girls who are mobilized to form adolescent girls groups in communities. A 60 hours life-skills based curricula is delivered by trained Sahyogis who are young women from local communities.

**3. Strengthening Community Partner Organization:** One partner in each target district selected and supported through trainings to build their capacities to work with adolescent girls and advocate for their rights, ensuring a sustainable support system for the girls.

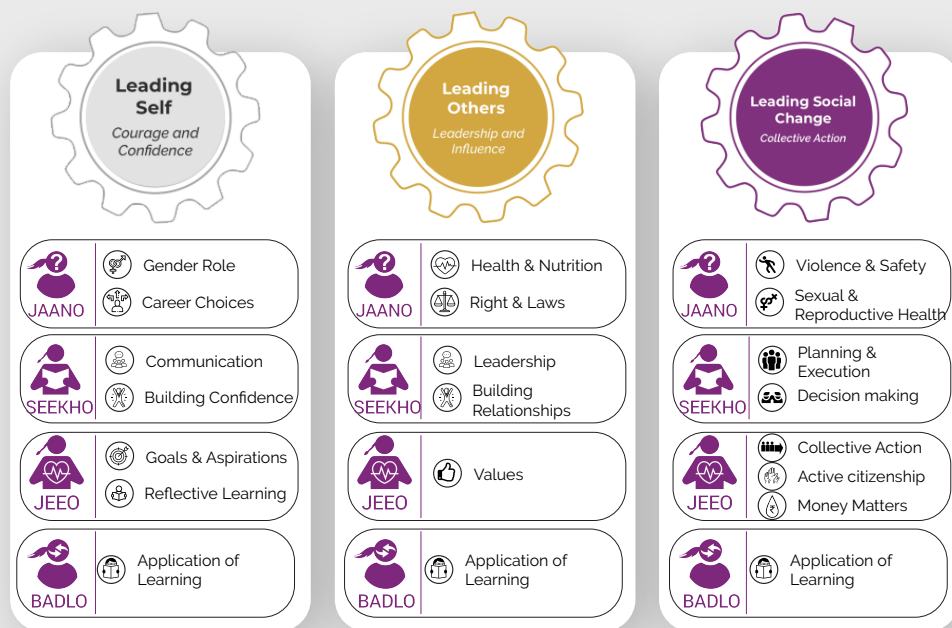
Girls undergo a journey focused on 18 core areas delivered through life-skills education, distributed across three pillars of:

**Leading self (courage and confidence):** Ability to gain critical consciousness by growing her sense of self-awareness, confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy; and to strengthen voice, participate and speak up in decisions that shape her life and future.

**Leading others (leadership and influence):** Ability to lead and inspire others; and to influence better health and development outcomes for girls and women at large.

**Leading social change (collective action):** Ability to stand up for self and others in situations that are unfair and unjust – gender or otherwise; and to identify opportunities that require social change and create awareness about it in the community.

Girls' individual and collective leadership can progressively challenge discriminatory gender norms<sup>2</sup> and girls who access secondary education are less likely to carry the burden of domestic household work and are more likely to experience gender equality in their homes.



## KEY OUTCOMES

We have identified 5 key outcomes that are vital for adolescent girls' well-being and empowerment.

**Completion of Secondary Education**– Education not only generates long-term results over generations but research also shows that staying in school longer reduces chances of early marriage and pregnancy, and improves health and income generating potential for adolescent girls.

**Improving Adolescent Health**- Working with adolescents on issues related to sexual and reproductive health increases their knowledge and awareness on SRH, use of contraceptives, delays pregnancy and decreases maternal mortality and prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

**Delaying Marriage and Pregnancy**- India has the world's largest share of child brides and a third of girls in India have given birth before the age of 19. Delaying the age of marriage and first pregnancy gives girls greater opportunities to develop their potential before taking on responsibilities associated with adulthood; ensuring better outcomes for future generations.

**Prevention of Gender Based Violence and Discrimination**– Violence against girls and women is widespread, not only in India but across the world. Every girl has the right to live her life freely, safely and free from violence. Early intervention through education and training provides access to information around their rights and services, helps forge positive gender attitudes, and builds skills to take action.

**Enhanced Agency**– Building agency shows greater confidence in girls and increased capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear.<sup>3</sup> Enhanced agency also improves interpersonal relationships.

## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

In our 3 year pilot between 2015 and 2017, we have received around 14,000 applications from Girl Icon aspirants. We have worked with 2,280 adolescent girls led by 114 Girl Icons in 3 states – Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. A total of 16 residential trainings of 5 days each have been organized. 203 Social Action Projects have been led by the network of girls to raise awareness on issues especially known to and faced by girls and women, advocating for their rights through rallies, street plays, seminars and workshops with support from key stakeholders like the village Sarpanch, Education Officers, NGO, Principals and school teachers.

According to the self-reported data:



peer group members report enhanced confidence.



peer group member report increased awareness on health and hygiene - menstrual hygiene, and nutrition.



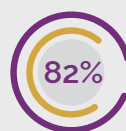
peer group member shows increased awareness around gender bias and stereotype.



Girl Icons report improved agency thus enhancing their decision making ability, confidence and communication.



Girl Icons report increased awareness to protect their health (sexual and reproductive) and themselves from violence.



Girl Icons report increased team work and social skills.

## OUR REACH

Milaan is working with a thriving network of



community based organizations



local women as facilitators



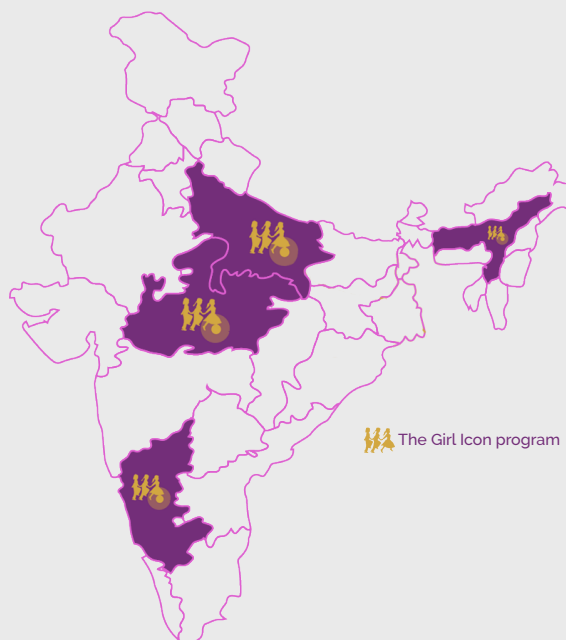
adolescent girls



Girl Icon Fellows



districts in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam



<sup>1</sup> NCPCR, National Colloquium on Vocational and Life Skills Training of Out-of-School Adolescent Girls in the age-group 15-18 years (2017)

<sup>2</sup> Tam O'Neil and Georgia Plank, with Pilar Domingo. Support to women and girls' leadership: A rapid review of the evidence, Overseas Development Institute (March 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Voice and Agency Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity, World Bank, 2014

[http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/World\\_bank\\_gender\\_voice\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/World_bank_gender_voice_LOWRES.pdf)