We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back. We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave - to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential.

Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner
How high-impact interventions give girls life-changing access to rights, resources and relationships

Meena Bhati was born into a Rajput family living in the Chanud Village of Pali district in Rajasthan, India. The Rajput community does not believe in educating girls. Meenu grew up in a society where women were treated with inequality in all walks of life. She was lucky that her parents gave her the opportunity to study, but only until class 10. She pleaded with them to allow her to continue her education after class 10, but she was told to pay attention to household chores and prepare for marriage instead. Soon after, she was married.

But life gave her an unexpected second chance. Her husband was a teacher, and understood the importance of education. Instead of risking her life with an adolescent pregnancy or being forced to work at home, Meena was re-enrolled in school. Though their parents disapproved, Meena’s husband stood by her side and supported her. She now holds a Bachelor’s degree in Education and is taking post-graduate courses in Hindi and Rural Development.

Meena joined a nonprofit and has risen through the ranks to become Field Communications Manager. Many of the organization’s staff and volunteers, as well as people in the community, look up to her.

Source: Adapted from https://educategirlsblog.wordpress.com/tag/success-story/

Meena’s story is inspiring, but it’s far from the norm.

As the most disconnected people in India adolescent girls are frequently cut off by age-old social practices, denial of rights, exclusion from key resources and the suspension of peer networks at puberty. Take schools for instance. The last national budget allocated INR 72,394 crore towards education but of every 100 girls enrolled in school only one makes it to class twelve. In other words, a “build it and they will come” approach simply does not work for India’s girls. Social entrepreneurs, donors and governments need to put a lot more thought into connecting girls to the rights, resources and relationships they need to thrive.

A “build it and they will come” attitude simply does not work for India’s girls. We need to put a lot more thought into connecting girls to the rights, resources and relationships they need to thrive.
Rights: Almost half of Indian girls between 20-24 were married before they turned 18 in contravention of Indian law.

Resources: Only two cents of every aid dollar goes towards adolescent girls.

Relationships: Suraj village in Mehsana has passed a resolution banning mobiles for teenage girls and young women; and a panchayat in an Aligarh village announced a similar ban, blaming the devices for ‘corrupting’ teenagers.

Girls are deeply disconnected from:

- Rights
- Resources
- Relationships
The good news is that even small improvements can produce dramatic results. A 1% improvement in girls’ senior secondary school enrolment would boost India’s GDP by $5.5 billion, and delaying pregnancy to age 20 would add another $77 billion. Similarly, modest improvements in girls’ financial resources would improve family well-being since 90% of a girl’s income is invested in her family versus 30-40% for men, leading to a tremendous intergenerational effect.

Solving the persistent disconnection of adolescent girls calls for fresh thinking and innovative solutions that tackle exclusion in unexpected and effective ways, and address access issues to maximize social return on investment. Dasra research reveals that Sport for Development (S4D) and Information & Communication Technology (ICT)-based programs are two high-potential interventions proven to strengthen the social connectivity of girls.

Sport is rapidly gaining recognition as a simple, low-cost, and effective means of achieving development goals. Its transformative power, universal appeal, ability to attract and bring people together, and its potential to empower young people make it a powerful tool to catalyze social change for girls. Similarly, technology connects girls to the incredible resources offered by the World Wide Web, brings vital health information to their doorsteps, amplifies their voices and supports relationship-building with peers and the wider community.

The past decade has seen mobile phones and the internet become increasingly available in even the hardest to reach or most underdeveloped regions. ICTs are creating demand amongst individuals and communities for new services, better education and broader development outcomes that go beyond poverty reduction to support their chances to join the knowledge economy and to be heard.


(Sport) connects with the most marginalized people that government policies cannot reach. If you tell these young people: ‘Here’s a classroom, go and learn or here’s a job, go and work,’ they don’t want to know. That’s a world they don’t understand.

Playing sport encourages girls to see themselves as self-determining individuals, and builds engagement with paired social programs. For instance, sport has been proven to increase attendance in schools as well as enhance the attention span of children in the classroom. However, only when this is complemented with adequate infrastructure, high-quality teachers and updated curriculum will educational outcomes improve. It is therefore important to understand that sport complements and supports various other initiatives in sectors such as education, health, gender equity, disability and employability.

Additionally, issues such as the high rate of early marriage and pregnancy, continued preference for the male child and lack of basic knowledge of sexual and reproductive health in India indicate that traditional approaches applied by government and nonprofits have not been fully successful in communicating and demonstrating key social messages to communities. It has therefore become imperative to explore new and innovative ways to deliver these messages. Sport, in the past few years, has proven—more than any traditional medium—to effectively attract and retain young people in development programs creating a gateway to communicate these messages in a sustained manner.

Far more than fun and games

That is the concept of sport for development—that play or sport is not only an end in itself, but also an effective mechanism to help key development goals."
Geographic Distribution of Sport for Development in India.
My name is Gulafsha. I’m 17 years old and I live in Mumbai, India. Lots and lots of important businesses run from this city, but if you come to my home, you wouldn’t think you’re in Mumbai. For one, no one in my neighborhood has a proper brick house. We make our homes with our own hands, with loose bricks and tarpaulin and tin sheets.

Most people in Mumbai know Dharavi as the ‘largest-ever’ slum (Note: It’s actually the largest in Asia), and loads of movies and books have been made about it. Not that this changes anything. It’s still this very crowded area full of shacks and open drains, and very narrow lanes that get flooded every monsoon. But I don’t mind because I have grown up here. Also, I am working very hard at my studies and at football. This is unusual—most friends my age stay at home, learning to take care of home and hearth at the cost of an education.

When I thought a bit about these friends of mine, I thought, “I have to get them out of these homes!” And that’s just what I did. I started a project to help the girls in my neighborhood play football, like me.

But before we started to play, I went door to door to try and convince parents to let their girls out to play. I took my mother along, because parents listen to other parents. She shared her story about me and how sending me for football classes with Magic Bus had probably been the best decision they had ever taken. She said “Gulafsha has even been to the USA to be part of a football coaching camp!”

The Sunday when I organized my first session, only 10 girls came. But by the next weekend, 20 had turned up, and then there was no looking back. Girls love the freedom of playing football, the running, the yelling, the teamwork. They tell me, “I never knew I had it in me to play like a boy!” Slowly, I am seeing their thinking change—now they don’t believe that staying at home is the only choice for a girl. They are not afraid to go out of their homes.

Source: Adapted from http://www.magicbus.org/case-stories/gulafsha
Sub-optimal return on development spends

Tens of thousands of crores go underleveraged because adolescent girls cannot access resources such as schools, hospitals, vocational training initiatives and more.

The cost of disconnection

Gender Equity
Employability
Education
Health

Why do we need to send a girl to school? It’s enough for her to have just primary education. Getting her married is good and it reduces our burden.

Only 3% of India’s specialist physicians are accessible to adolescent girls in rural India.

Note: Rs.10,000 crore corresponds to roughly $1.5 billion.
Gender Equity

India ranks an abysmal 129 out of a total 146 countries on the gender equality index—far below its neighbors Bangladesh (112) and Pakistan (115) and only slightly better than Afghanistan.3

Sport provides an entry point to reach girls on a variety of social issues, including health, education and human rights, particularly when social interaction outside the home is constrained. It provides girls with access to safe spaces in which to assemble, enjoy mobility and freedom of expression, build skills in communication, teamwork, leadership and negotiation and create their own supportive social networks. Given that sport is traditionally a male domain; girls’ participation in sport itself strongly challenges gender stereotypes, breaking deep-rooted attitudes of boys, families and communities.

Nonprofits in India are using sport effectively to balance gender inequity by working with both girls and boys. ‘Parivartan’, for instance, a Mumbai based project uses cricket as a medium to engage boys in discussions regarding violence against women, aggression and relationship abuse. According to an external evaluation, 70% of participants, including the boys and coaches, recorded a positive change in behavior towards women.

Education

Most girls in India are poorly informed about sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, the ban on sex education classes in certain states such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra due to cultural constraints has led to even lesser dissemination of crucial life-saving knowledge.5

Being unemployable is a combination of a variety of factors such as lack of education, lack of guidance regarding further education or employment opportunities and lack of role models at home or in communities that have the desired qualities and skills necessary for active involvement in the labour market.

Nonprofits in India are using sport as an incentive both within school and outside of school to improve attendance and educational outcomes. For instance, Project KHEL based in Lucknow conducts high-quality sport programs for schools in marginalized areas. According to evaluations, attendance on the day of the sport was always nearly 100% as compared to other days when a large number of children skipped school. The children admitted to being highly motivated to come to school because of the sport program.

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Physical activity in itself not only tackles non-communicable diseases such as asthma, anemia, diabetes and cancer, but also motivates youth to follow a healthy lifestyle. Naz Foundation in Delhi works to prevent HIV/ AIDS amongst adolescent girls and realized over the years that traditional interventions such as community awareness campaigns, tailoring classes or beautician courses may attract girls at first but often fail to retain them and are unsuccessful in communicating the HIV/AIDS message.

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The Role of Celebrity Athletes

Regardless of where they live, children and youth identify with and emulate national and international sport heroes. Successful sportspersons stimulate national pride, unity and a sense of achievement. Women athletes dispel the misconception that sport is not biologically or socially appropriate for girls and provide a visible demonstration of what is possible for girls and women to achieve. Sportspersons wield significant influence on youth, nationally and globally, enabling them to make a powerful contribution to development initiatives. As Cheryl Miller, the Olympic Gold medallist, observed, “When you reach a certain level of visibility, you are a role model whether you like it or not.”

The potential impact of athletes on development is best illustrated by the case of Earvin ‘Magic’ Johnson, basketball legend and hero to millions of youth worldwide. Johnson’s announcement that he was withdrawing from active sport because he was HIV infected was a milestone in the fight against HIV/AIDS because it was the first time a sport superstar admitted openly to having the dreaded disease.

Perhaps most important, his actions changed peoples’ perceptions about HIV and its prevention. As a result of Johnson’s announcement, awareness and accurate knowledge of HIV increased, as did people’s desire to obtain more information about the disease. Calls to AIDS hotlines, and the number of people getting tested for HIV also increased. In addition, studies showed an increased understanding of vulnerability to HIV among adults and changes in high-risk behaviours.

Other athletes such as the Moroccan hurdler Nawal El Moutawakel, the first African and Muslim woman to win a gold medal at the Olympics and Deng Yaping, a Chinese table tennis player who won 18 world championships, are role models for millions of girls across the world. Both these women made huge strides for women in their countries and have now gone on to become strong advocates for girls and sport.

A survey administered to adolescent clinic attendees in the United States after Magic Johnson’s announcement that he had HIV produced the following results:

- **60% reported that Johnson’s announcement increased their awareness of AIDS.**
- **65% reported increased self-efficacy in a sexual situation.**
- **38% described increased resistance to peer pressure for sexual intercourse.**
In disconnected India, girls and women make up just 29% of Internet users and are disallowed by village leaders from using mobile phones.

A study by British risk analysis firm MapleCroft suggests that India has the worst digital divide among BRIC countries. MapleCroft’s Digital Inclusion Index stated India was at “extreme risk” meaning that the country’s population suffers from a severe lack of digital inclusion. The World Bank concurs, warning that India’s most excluded remain locked out of the benefits of the digital economy. However, policy interventions are trying to bridge the gap: The government’s ambitious Digital India plan, which is an umbrella initiative with an initial outlay of INR 1.13 lakh crore, covers nine programs that include broadband highways, 100% mobile coverage, electronic manufacturing and electronic delivery of services by 2018.

While there are no silver bullets in development, there are multiplier effects, and perhaps none more potent than Information & Communication Technology (ICT). In development—as in every other field of human endeavor—ICT is a game changer that shrinks distances, enables scale at attractive cost and allows for entirely new classes of solutions.

Consider this: while a child is 15 times more likely to die within the first month of being born than any other time before his or her first birthday, at least half these lives can be saved by scaling up knowledge of basic newborn care among young mothers—which can be communicated by SMS or voice messages to even the most basic mobile phones.

In India the ICT revolution is complicated by a yawning digital divide that effectively creates two countries in one. In connected India, a booming ICT industry generates $150 billion annually and electronics manufacturer Apple sees “huge market potential” for iPhones.

By the end of 2014, fewer than two out of every five Indian businesses had an online presence, compared with almost two-thirds of firms in China. The World Bank said residential broadband service in India was six to 10 times more expensive than in the Middle Kingdom.
Ahiliya is 26 and lives in the Khagaria district of Bihar. During her first two years of marriage, she became pregnant twice. She lost her first child because she did not know about the antenatal vitamins she should have been taking, or the diet she should have followed. The second time, she gave birth to a boy, but he died of malnutrition before his second birthday. Now, she is pregnant again, but this time she feels confident and is very excited. What has changed?

The Anganwadi worker in Ahiliya’s village now uses an audio-visual tool called Mobile Kunji when counseling families during home visits. Using her mobile phone, she plays back messages to the women about life-saving healthy behaviors in the local Angika dialect and in the voice of a fictional “Dr Anita,” which has given the community a measure of reassurance. Ahiliya now takes iron and folic acid supplements and has decided to give her baby mashed food along with breast milk from six months onwards.
Technology for Gender Equity

The ICT revolution has created tremendous wealth and development impact, but the benefits have not accrued equally to everyone. According to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), barriers for girls and women include the absence of basic infrastructure, the absence of English literacy and lack of opportunities for training in computer skills. Where infrastructure exists, girls’ access tends to be mediated by male decision makers. Consider BBC Media Action’s finding that a family-owned phone is often carried to work by a male member of the household. As a result, a pilot Kilkari voice service that delivered voice messages on issues like pregnancy, family planning and childbirth often could not reach the intended beneficiary.

The evidence suggests that using ICT to create gender equity for adolescent girls requires greater focus on access and digital literacy training to enable them to be empowered users of technology. IT for Change, based in Bangalore, is a nonprofit that seeks to promote innovative and effective use of ICT for socio-economic change in the global south.

Ansuja Madiwal, a 15-year-old student, always had an interest in computers, but was only allowed half an hour a day to experiment with and learn about one at her school in Dharavi in Mumbai. But that was before she joined the Dharavi Diary programme in 2014. Within a year, Ansuja was so proficient at coding, she built a mobile app called Women Fight Back to help women in distress. It offers SMS alerts, distress alarms, and emergency phone calls. Ansuja says it already has over 100 downloads from the Google Play Store.

Its six community-owned public Internet access points in Mysore district are staffed by Dalit women, and help connect adolescent girls and women to information and services. They are assisted by young women who play the role of information intermediaries, building their own digital literacy as well as serving the community.

“When I want to find out about schemes offered by the government” says Vinodha, “I first search online. I then visit the department to find out if people in my village are eligible to apply.”

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Technology for Education

Educating girls has an incredible development payoff. The World Bank estimates that an additional year of secondary education for a girl adds 25% to her wages throughout her life. What is more, educated girls marry later, and have fewer and healthier, better-educated children in turn. Technology can play a key role in connecting girls to a school education, improving the educational experience while they’re in school, and crucially—given India’s drop-out rate—educating out-of-school girls.

Digital Study Hall (DSH) is a nonprofit based in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh that uses low-cost technology to create a database of recorded videos of live classes by the best grassroots teachers from middle-class urban schools, university professors and scientists. These videos are then distributed to government schools in rural and slum areas to deliver quality instructions to students. DSH has developed over 2,000 videos so far covering the state curriculum, special education, digital stories and teacher training.

The organization has also partnered with 41 girls residential schools (KGBVs) in Uttar Pradesh to distribute critical dialogue videos to these schools on topics such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and child marriage. So far, DSH has partnered with over 100 government schools reaching out to about 20,000 students and teachers. Similarly, IT for Change has partnered with UNICEF and local bodies to launch the Kishori Chitrapatra project which explores the use of ICT, especially video, radio and computing technology, to educate out-of-school adolescent girls in using the tools of mass communication. Early results showed that it has led girls to articulate a desire to be working women, built their confidence and helped them negotiate delayed marriage.

“Girls are still treated as second priority in our community. Once girls and boys get (the) same opportunity to get (a) good education this problem will be solved forever” - Minakshi, 15 years old.
India is home to 17% of the world’s population but bears 20% of the global disease burden, 25% of maternal conditions causing death and 20% of all cases of nutritional deficiency. While there is no denying the need for large-scale systemic change in the delivery of healthcare in India, much can be achieved through less daunting solutions such as timely access to essential life-saving information and behavior change communication.

In 2015, Dasra mapped over 100 non-profits and social businesses using ICTs in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) programs, and identified nine key interventions targeted at one or more of the following: end beneficiaries, health providers, and overall health systems. Solutions typically involve the collection, transmission and/or analysis of real-time data, information and communication, using mobile devices and the internet.

Mobile Kunji, mentioned earlier, is one audio-visual behavior change communication aid used by health workers in the northern state of Bihar. It consists of a mobile phone and a deck of laminated cards printed with information relevant to various stages of family planning, pregnancy and postnatal care for children up to two years old. The health worker can look up the card and call the unique short code printed at the bottom. The recorded voices of a “Dr Anita” or her assistant “Nishant Kumar” provide further information during the call. This ensures that all relevant information is accurately covered, instead of relying only on the health worker’s memory. The use of Mobile Kunji is being ramped up to hundreds of thousands of frontline workers.
Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of ICT-backed interventions for livelihoods involve technology-enablement for jobs and businesses. A typical example is the Inter-city Marketing Network of Women Entrepreneurs project in Chennai, India that provides women constrained by pressures of time and mobility with cellular phones to help them sell not only in their immediate neighborhoods but also new markets within the city.19

There are few if any initiatives in the ICT-for-livelihoods space that target adolescent girls by design, but several have positive spillover effects. In rural India, a three-year awareness program on opportunities in the BPO industry increased women’s enrollment in relevant training programs as intended, but also increased school enrollment among young girls by 3-5%. This suggests that a possible avenue of leveraging ICT for employability is to disseminate information on employment and training opportunities among older girls even when they are not immediately eligible.

Technology for Employability
Good intentions are not enough - India needs innovative approaches to social connectivity

Meena Bhati, the adolescent bride mentioned at the beginning of this report was able to find her way to a college education and rewarding job thanks to a supportive environment. While not all girls are that lucky, every girl can benefit from negotiating better with her family, learning about her body and her rights, accessing healthcare no matter where she lives, or experiencing the exultation of sport.

The nature of disconnection in India makes it obvious that there cannot be impact without access. And when it comes to connectivity, sport and ICT are two of the most exciting interventions of recent years, proven to equip girls with life-changing resources, rights and relationships. That means farsighted organizations can change the world for girls, and change the world through girls, by leveraging the power of social connectivity. Sport and technology show the way.
Focus on Connectivity

Sport for development and Information & Communication Technology for development are proven to connect girls to development resources, driving far greater value from each rupee spent.

TO MAXIMIZE SOCIAL ROI

Note: Rs.10,000 crore corresponds to roughly $1.5 billion

If someone had introduced these ideas to me while I was still in school perhaps I too would have learned to ‘Say No’ and stopped my child marriage. I can’t undo my past but I can teach young girls how to ‘Say No’ in the face of pressure.

As part of the program I was encouraged to learn how to use the computer and speak better English. I worked hard and today I have a job where I teach computer skills to others.

98%

Of adolescent girls enrolled in the Magic Bus football-based program continue to attend secondary school, compared to the 46% national average.

In a country where 70% of the population lives in rural areas and faces a 60% shortage of doctors, ICTs can deliver life-saving healthcare information to anyone with a mobile phone or Internet connection.

GENDER EQUITY

EMPLOYABILITY

EDUCATION

HEALTH

$13.4 billion

$268 million

$3.9 billion

$3.5 billion

$5.9 billion

$10.4 billion

\(a\)

\(b\)

\(c\)

\(d\)

\(e\)

\(f\)

\(g\)

\(h\)

\(i\)


32. Digitalstudyhall.in. (2016). Digital Study Hall. [online] Available at: http://www.digitalstudyhall.in/.


The Cost of Disconnection


Focus on Connectivity: To Maximize Social ROI

(a) Quote adapted from NAF Foundation’s case study (currently unupdated).


