
**IMPACT OF LEARNING
COMMUNITY 2015-2016
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide an in-depth look at how the Adolescent Girls Learning Community in Mumbai has grown since its inception in 2012 and its impact in 2015. The Learning Community has been supported by EMpower - The Emerging Markets Foundation.

The Learning Community was formed to empower adolescent girls to lead change in their local communities. It provides training and support to 79 adolescent girls and 11 young female staff of its eight member organisations for them to lead interventions and seek solutions to problems of restrictions, mobility and public safety for girls.

The focus population of the Learning Community consists of:

1. **Girls:** Each member organisation selected 10 adolescent girls who are trained in leadership and project planning skills to tackle priority issues they and other girls face.
2. **Mentors:** Each organisation selected female staff members under the age of 30, who are provided training to mentor the girl leaders. They are responsible for guiding girls to lead their own interventions and coordination with the other member organisations.

The Learning Community enables member organisations, all of whom work with adolescent girls, to increase the leadership and visibility of adolescent girls within their communities, including by the girls choosing, designing and implementing impactful interventions. The two key objectives of the learning community are:

- 1) Enable initiatives led by girls
 - By funding and supporting projects to *amplify girls' voices* in their local environments.
 - By empowering them to *lead interventions* within their community.
- 2) Network and Capacity Building
 - By facilitating organisations networking so they *learn from each other and maximize impact*.
 - By *strengthening* the evaluation and mentoring capacity of younger female staff.
 - By *providing tools and resources* to assist the organisations and efforts in these efforts.

The Learning Community completed three years in January 2015.

- In year one (2012–13), four grantee partners of EMpower—**Vacha Trust, Akshara, Aangan Trust and Vidhayak Sansad**—formed this community.
- In 2013, **Committee of Resource Organisation (CORO), Dosti, and Stree Mukti Sanghatana** joined the learning community (CORO subsequently became an EMpower grantee partner)
- In 2014-15, **Young Women's Christian Association of Bombay (YWCA)** joined.

Vacha Trust is the coordinating organisation of the Learning Community, and Senior Mentors Amrita De and Yagna Parmar became lead coordinators in 2014-5.

The group activities conducted in the Learning Community in 2015 were:

- 1) Launch phase (January- March)
 - Training for mentors (January 21st- 22nd, 2015)
 - Encounter (*Rubaroo*): Girls from each organisation chose the theme they want to work on (February 1st, 2015)
 - Workshop for girl leaders on leadership, monitoring and evaluation skills. Finalization of action plan by the girls and the mentors. (February, 8th 2015)
- 2) Implementation phase (April- November): The girls implemented their plans, with monitoring and guidance by the mentors through frequent meetings.
- 3) End of Implementation phase (November- December):
 - a. Girls from all the organisations jointly implemented an event, which was a sports day held on November 30th 2015, with over 800 girls re-claiming a public ground to play sports.
 - b. Following which a sharing meeting was held on December 13th 2015 where the girls and mentors shared their experiences, achievements and make plans for creating a yearbook.
- 4) Year-End Event (January 28th 2016): The girls and their mentors present their work and communicate their findings, followed by the launch of their yearbook at an event attended by people and organisations interested in the Learning Community and the girls' interventions.

Strengthened Measurement and Assessment Findings

In 2015, a suite of tools and instruments were published based on tools created for the learning community to better assess changes in girls, mentors, and communities through the trainings, support and activities carried out through the Learning Community. These tools were piloted in 2014 and refined and published in 2015. They are available in English and Hindi online on EMpower's website. They can be found here: <http://www.empowerweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/April-LC-toolkit-2015-EMpower.pdf>.

These tools were applied in 2015, and the impact report provides an assessment of changes brought about through the Learning Community over the last two years based on baseline and endline data collected from the girls and mentors. It aims to:

- 1) Map the reach and impact of the interventions led by the girls.
- 2) Measure the effectiveness of the Learning Community's training and activities at the individual level (girls), organisational level (mentors), and community level.

Impact on Girls' Individual Capacities and Perceptions

To assess the impact of the program on the girls, changes were measured in their self-efficacy, self-confidence, leadership, community participation abilities, social capital, and capability to address gender inequalities.

The findings from the Learning Community provide strong evidence that:

- 1) **91% of girls noticed improvements in their planning skills.** The findings indicate that the training enabled girls to be able to analyze their situation, express their ideas, and act in their communities.
- 2) **78% of girls achieved improvements in public speaking skills and overcame problems faced while addressing the public.** The change is significant considering most of these girls belong to families and communities where they do not have much say, reportedly facing difficulties in expressing themselves in front of their family members.
- 3) **69% of girls reported positive self-transformation** in terms of: reclaiming more mobility and making their community spaces safer; being able to assert themselves as active agents in their families and communities; talking about the problems of sexual harassment; and awareness of gender-based discrimination and violence and how to address these.
- 4) **67% of girls showed improvement in their understanding of gender roles and abilities.** This is an important transformation as most of the girls initially displayed uncritical acceptance of gender-based discrimination in their families and communities.
- 5) **63% of girls acquired self-confidence to become agents of change in their communities.** Participating in the Learning Community helped them understand and address real-world challenges to their mobility and safety, identify their own strengths and how to use these to work towards solving issues they face.
- 6) **66% of girls improved self-efficacy--a greater belief in their ability to complete tasks and reach goal.**

Changes Girls Sought to Achieve in their Communities

The girls improved their planning skills after they prepared plans for activities, budget, and strategies to implement projects, obtained permission from relevant authorities to organize interventions and executed several activities in their communities which helped them to gain project planning skills.

"These girls are the leaders of today and tomorrow. If provided the right opportunity, they can certainly do so much"- Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Laureate, participating in a CORO event, with girls from the Learning Community

The results show that girls emerged as empowered agents of change in their community who amplified their voices through their improved communication skills, action-based activities, meaningful interaction with peers, and opportunities to creatively address and solve their problems in their communities.

Highlights of key changes girls were able to bring about, regarding the issues that each group identified:

Group of Girls from Organisation	Changes girls wanted to bring in their community	3 Key Achievements
Akshara	Reduce restrictions on girls for accessing public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls have started accessing public spaces (playgrounds, the street library and the street) - Girls' interventions were covered in the media - Issue of restrictions of girls face in accessing public spaces were communicated to the government authorities, community and media
Aangan	Increase police patrolling in Rafi nagar M- East ward;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More girls joined LC initiatives - They received support from boys for working on issue of sexual harassment - Increased police patrolling including those in civil dress - Media covered the issue
Vacha	Public playground and community toilet become clean, free and safe in two communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media coverage on the issue of community toilets - Pressure groups of women formed in two communities to work on this issue - Government authorities worked on this issue and at least in one community, toilet is now operational
Vidhayak Sansad	Create a safe environment for girls; reduce incidence of sexual harassment; impart knowledge of laws to women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased mobility for the girls in their communities - Police patrolling increased in areas around girls' school/colleges; they can safely go to these places - Girls living in government shelter home received information on sexual harassment for the first time
CORO	Increase awareness about girls rights in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reached out to more girls and the community - formation of support system of women and boys in community for girls safety - Girls demands have been presented to government authorities
SMS	Create equal opportunities and safe environment for girls in Govandi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls mobility increased - Girls received support from parents
Dosti	Increase girls safety on street and other public spaces in Worli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls presented their demands of accessing public spaces and issue of sexual harassment to the public - Visibility of girls in community increased - Two police booths have become functional - Increased police patrolling near schools in two areas
YWCA	Reduced incidences of sexual harassment in community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls feel more confident to speak about the problems and restrictions they face in the community - Girls have become more aware of their rights and know how to contact police for help - Incidents of sexual harassment have not decreased but girls' ability to protest and take preventive actions have improved

Impact at the Organisational Level

Junior staff members of the organisations trained as mentors were expected to develop improved mentoring and project management skills in the Learning Community, to prepare them also to take on more responsibilities or authority in their own organisations.

A thematic analysis of mentors' feedback from the end of the second year was conducted to measure the changes in mentors' capacities and mentoring skills after participating in the Learning Community. The thematic analysis of mentors' self-evaluation forms highlights that the Learning Community helped mentors to gain planning skills and improved their potential to contribute towards their organisational responsibilities.

100% of mentors reported an increase in their planning skills to:

- plan events
- prepare a budget
- present in public, and deliver a speech
- communicate with government authorities for addressing problems in the community
- monitor and evaluate projects
- prepare and write a report
- manage time and meet deadlines
- coordinate with other organisations and girls
- prepare and write a report
- generate new ideas (creativity)

The Learning Community helped mentors and organisations to facilitate, develop and experiment with practical tools required for girls to address issues in their communities. This helped them to create hands-on approaches and an opportunity to enhance their knowledge of planning and responsibility in the Learning Community as well as in their organisations.

- 91% of the year-3 mentors displayed increased mentoring skills
- 82% of the mentors reported an increase in their understanding of adolescent girls.
- 73% of the mentors completely fulfilled their aims to learn from each other
- 63% of mentors completely fulfilled their objectives for girls
- 54% of the mentors completely fulfilled their objectives for working with the community

Individual level changes reported by mentors in their reflection forms showed that:

- 82% reported an improvement in their communication skills within their organisation, with girls and community members
- 81% reported an improvement in their skills to defend girls' rights
- 72% reported an improved positive identity in their organisation and community
- 63% reported improvement in their accountability towards girls, projects assigned to them and responsibilities
- 55% reported improvement in their leadership skills and gender-sensitivity
- 45% reported an increase in their negotiation skills

"It's heartening to see adolescent girls among the grassroots leaders of Maharashtra", Mr. Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, participating in an event with girls from the Learning Community

Learning from Each Other

Learning was a multi-pronged process through: the exchange of knowledge, in networks by working together on similar issues, on the job by implementing the processes learned, and experiences in the field. A thematic analysis of the feedback provided by mentors at the end of implementation was conducted to measure what the mentors and the member organisations learned from each other and whether the Learning Community helped in facilitating these networks.

The thematic analysis of mentors' feedback highlights that the learning community activities enabled girls and mentors to interact, which provided many opportunities for collective learning and networking.

- 73% of mentors reported an increased professional network after interacting with different organisations, institutions and community groups.
- 64% mentors reported increased camaraderie and trust between staff from different organisations.
- 54% mentors reported improvement in their technology-based communication through the use of Facebook, WhatsApp and smart phones.
- 45% reported improved problem-solving abilities and team dynamics by working with each other.
- 37% reported improved multi-level coordination among the different organisations during the implementation of the activities

Specific Examples of Learnings from Mentors

Knowledge Exchange		
<i>From Aangan I have learnt how to share information and resources with girls. From Nishaat, I have learnt to talk about sensitive topics with girls.</i> - Sushma, CORO	<i>I have learnt from other mentors how to share information so that everyone in our network may benefit.</i> - Sonali More, DOSTI	<i>I learnt to make improved presentations and got new ideas to develop a yearbook from the Learning Community.</i> - Shilpa Ragnekar, SMS
Learning in Networks		
<i>I have learnt how to work with team of girls and team of mentors from Vacha trust. I have learnt to be more patient and open to other people's ideas</i> - Sonali More, DOSTI	<i>I learnt different ways of presenting and communicating our work from other organisations, in particular from Akshara and Aangan. From CORO I learnt how to engage boys in the Learning Community activities.</i> - Shabana, Vacha	<i>I placed my trust in my fellow mentors and even though they are from other organisations they always helped me. I have learnt to control my temper and argue peacefully.</i> - Pooja Surum, Vidhayak Sansad <i>From Yagna Parmar (Vacha), I learnt how to understand everyone and coordinate.</i> - Manisha Pol, Dosti
Learning on the Job		
<i>I have learnt to use facebook and WhatsApp to communicate the results of our activities</i> - Gayatri Sonwade, SMS	<i>I received guidance from Vacha and through my interaction with girls from other organisations, I learnt about the challenges that girls belonging to SC and ST communities face in the bastis.</i> - Sushma Kale, CORO	<i>I have never done so many things together in a year. I used to be concerned earlier but I am now proud that I can do better. I know my strengths now.</i> - Deepali Jangam, Akshara

The Learning Community interventions contributed to the collective learning by:

- Providing the mentors with new skills, broadened networks and innovative tools to strengthen their work to drive social change in their respective contexts.
- Bringing together mentors, girl leaders and participants from different communities, backgrounds and cultures to work on common issues.
- Through joint activities, providing mentors opportunities to share ideas on common challenges.

- Creating an active network that addresses and supports girls' issues and causes, while also laying the platform for a more connected future.

Impact at the Community Level

An analysis of activities implemented by the girls was done to understand the number of people who participated/benefitted, their effects on the community, as well as how girls claimed a space and how they exercised leadership through engagement with the community.

Highlights of the findings on girls' use of various platforms, methods and processes in 2015 to engage with community and stakeholders to address issues that they faced regarding public safety, mobility and restrictions.

- 33 activities were implemented by 8 organisations: rallies, surveys, street play, protest march, flash mob, meetings, film screening, online campaigns, press conference, sports day, photo exhibitions, workshops, signature campaigns, and panel discussions
- 79 girls mobilized 3468 people to participate in these 33 activities
- 800 girls directly benefitted by these interventions
- 22, 104 community members were reached across Mumbai

Additional joint activities:

- All the girls and mentors from the member organisations jointly implemented an activity, which was a sports day on November 30th 2015 at Lalit Kala Bhavan ground in Mumbai, which involved over 800 girls.
- The girls planned, developed the research questions, and in September-December, implemented a survey of 1300 girls throughout Mumbai on questions related to restrictions faced or perceived by girls. The results are being analyzed and will be available in mid-2016.
- The girls came together to represent the learning community at the National level seminar on improving Girl's Agency and at CORO's leadership fest-Umeedon ki Udaan.
- Girls participated in a panel to make final decisions on awards for short-listed candidates from the Asia Pacific Region for the With and For Girls Collective awards. This was one of five panels globally.

The activities led to:

- increased visibility of girls in their communities
- community-level actions being taken up by various stakeholders and public authorities on girls' safety
- increased community awareness and involvement on restrictions and public safety faced by girls
- Girls being able to reclaim public space in their communities both physically and discursively
- The achievement of girls were covered 12 times in print and TV media.

Snehal Ambekar, Mayor of Mumbai, attended the Sports Day: *"The achievements of these young girls are outstanding."*