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POWERWITHIN
empowering girls to **learn** & **lead**

The Power to Lead:
A Leadership Model for Adolescent Girls

"Before I came here, I never thought I could do so many things. I have learned so much, and gained so much confidence. I want other girls to have the same opportunity as me."

– SANDHYA RANI

AGE 13, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA
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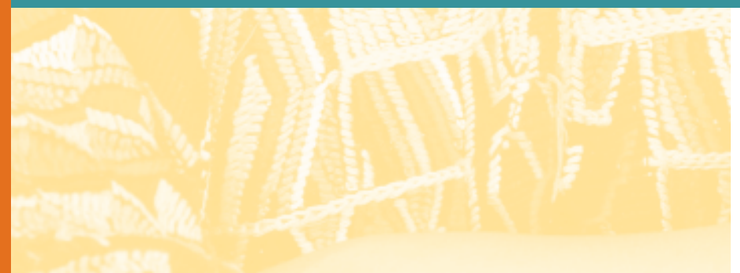

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In developing a programmatic strategy for Power Within, Basic and Girls' Education commissioned consultants Archer Heinz and Cynthia J. Prather to develop the Power Within: Empowering Girls to Learn and Lead discussion paper that was completed in May 2008. Special thanks go to Dr. Heinz and Ms. Prather as the discussion paper was a critical first step for CARE in understanding how adolescent girls' leadership skills development enhances basic education in developing countries. It also is the foundation for this paper which seeks to outline CARE's approach to developing leadership skills among young adolescent girls through education programs.

Finally, CARE would like to acknowledge the girls with whom we are working throughout the developing world. As stated by Koffi Annan in a speech made in New York in 2004, "When it comes to solving many of the problems of this world, I believe in girl power." We hope that through our programs we can continue to cultivate and support "girl power."

Foreword

Since its founding in 1945, CARE has been implementing education-related activities, beginning with programs to build schools, operate school-feeding initiatives, develop educational materials, and run literacy programs. CARE's 60 years of education programming have laid a rich foundation for a focus on educational quality. Today, in more than 40 countries, CARE is engaged in education programs targeting marginalized populations in almost every region of the world—Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and Southeastern Europe—in a wide variety of education intervention areas. CARE's programs in education draw on the organization's long history of working to improve gender equity through programming approaches that focus on gendered divisions of labor and resources in poor communities and the unequal power relations that underlie women's vulnerability.

With education for girls the single highest return on investment in the developing world,[1] CARE launched the Power Within program to support girls completing their primary education and to develop their leadership skills. The aim of the program is to empower girls to work with their families, communities and countries to overcome poverty. It also acknowledges the critical importance of working with boys to achieve that aim. Power Within draws on CARE's extensive experience and best practices in affecting positive social change by providing vulnerable girls with educational attainment that is enhanced through leadership training and supported by community, national and international advocacy efforts around the rights of girls.

This paper was developed to help guide CARE's leadership model for girls in Power Within. It provides a literature review of definitions and approaches to girls' education and leadership development. In addition to the literature review, expert informant interviews were conducted to develop a working definition of leadership and identify leadership competencies, and the findings are presented. Finally, this paper outlines the process of reflection that was undertaken once a definition of leadership for young adolescent girls had been developed. Using CARE's gender empowerment framework to develop a theory of change, a girl's leadership model was developed that values the role primary school education has in a girls' life at this age, as well as her ability to interact in structured activities that build her leadership skills.

1 Introduction

UNESCO projects that with current trends the goal of eliminating gender disparities at both primary and secondary levels will be missed in 2015 in over 90 out of 172 countries.[2] Experience around the world points to the effectiveness of intensive teacher training, curriculum support and community mobilization in raising student enrollment and completion rates, as well as notable improvements in learner achievement and self-confidence.[3] However, these accomplishments cannot be attained without changing the gaps that exist between the status of boys and girls. Through reflective learning and piloting of quality education measures, we know that violence against girls in school and changes in perceptions about future aspirations for girls do not happen spontaneously or without targeted interventions.[4] If special aims are not made to focus on the specific needs of girls, power dynamics are unlikely to change inside or outside the classroom, and girls stand a diminished chance of catching up or succeeding.

As stated in *Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda,* key actors within the development community need to make strategic and significant investments in programs focused on adolescent girls that are "commensurate with their importance as contributors to the achievement of economic and social goals."[5] Sound development policies and practices require the participation of young adolescent girls whose "rights, needs, and opportunities" as an age cohort, are often overlooked.[6] Not much research exists on the specific needs of adolescent girls because, among other things, donors often fail to disaggregate and count them; and, along with governments, fail to design effective programs for them.[7] Perhaps most surprisingly, though we recognize women as a powerful catalyst to change development outcomes[8], we have very little recorded about how girls can be supported to become stronger and more empowered women by focusing on their critical transition to adulthood. Models for girls' leadership do exist, but they have been developed primarily in wealthier countries and not enough evidence has been brought to bear about the impact of these models. Too little is known about what girls want or expect out of leadership experiences or how it will influence their future roles in society.[9]

This paper focuses on leadership development for girls ages 10 to 14 because, in many parts of the developing world, this is the critical period of life when a girl is expected to transition from childhood to adulthood. Too often, this transition is marked with little time for a girl to form her own opinions, try out new skills, or safely explore her world without the burden of adult responsibilities.

2 Girls and the Age of Leadership

The focus of this paper is on girls ages 10 to 14 years and their leadership development. As stated above, this is the period of early adolescence, when puberty brings about physical changes and gender roles become more defined as girls begin the transition to adulthood. The literature provides the following insights to that period:

Adolescence is a time of psychological risk and heightened vulnerability for girls. Prior to adolescence, many girls are able to voice their feelings and demonstrate a strong sense of self. When they reach puberty, however, they may be torn between pressures to conform to a dominant cultural ideal of "selfless" femininity and womanhood or to move toward maturity through separation and independence. There is risk in conforming and losing one's voice as well as important relationships. They are further hampered because there is enormous resistance by adults to listen to girls, especially marginalized girls. As a result, adolescent girls often lose their voices.[10]

While for boys, adolescence means greater possibilities and a broadening world, for girls it means greater limitations. "On the whole, 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."[11]

Early adolescence is an appropriate time to teach leadership to girls. Despite the varied girls' leadership programs mentioned in the literature for high-school-age teens, several researchers[12] focused on the early teens as the time to teach leadership. Michael Gurian, author of *The Wonder of Girls,* speaks perhaps most strongly on the importance of learning at the upper elementary/primary school age.

"A girl's relationships, intimacies, sports activities, art and musical activities, as well as academic learning during the ten-to-twelve period have a great likelihood of sticking or at least reappearing later in her life because of their interconnection with the massive brain growth. There is also a greater likelihood that she will not be as good at things she didn't practice during these two years… We wouldn't want to say that everything a girl does from ten to twelve will stick, or that she can't learn something at sixteen, twenty, or thirty that she didn't do at eleven. Yet it is amazing to see how often it does work out that what we care about in early adolescence resurfaces in later adolescence, and throughout life."[13]

Primary school focus corresponds with worldwide goals for education. Preparing girls to be leaders by the end of primary school corresponds directly with United Nations' Millennium Development Goal 2, "to achieve universal primary education," and its related target "to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." Countries have committed to reaching that goal, but universal secondary education, particularly for girls, is a much more distant vision. With access to girls in primary school, a goal within reach, providing leadership training for primary-level girls seems more attainable than for secondary-level girls.

Although it should begin at an early age, leadership training should be continued and expanded for girls at the secondary level. In *Keeping the Promise: Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education,* the author sees primary education as "a significant accomplishment but an unfinished road for the developing world girl child."[14] Secondary education "equips students with critical thinking, enabling civic participation and democratic change." Leadership essentials are reinforced, expanded, deepened, and made more sustainable at the secondary level.

3 Review of Literature and Expert Opinions on Girls' Leadership

Our literature review reveals that while there are countless books and references that speak to women's leadership in general and ways to achieve it, much of the discussion defines leadership from both a developed-country and adult-business perspective. Nonetheless, the existing literature on leadership can help create a broader framework from which to discuss approaches to girls' leadership. The discussion in this section keeps this paper's focus on youth leadership models and what they may have to tell us about girls' leadership promotion in the developing world.

3.1 Youth Leadership Models: How is Leadership Defined?

Using broad definitions, leadership encompasses many qualities and components. The term's definition also depends on context. However, most youth leadership models share the same general philosophy that youth leadership will help strengthen young people's sense of self, develop confidence, provide opportunities for youth to speak out, and play an important role in their communities. While some successful youth leadership models are being used by development organizations, the literature review found a myriad of well-documented, industrialized-world models compared with relatively few models for working with girls in developing countries. The following section describes some of these findings.

Many reflections on youth leadership start to define youth leaders in terms of the actions that they take in relationship to the world around them. In the article, "Leadership Development: An Examination of Individual and Programmatic Growth," authors Conner and Strobe define youth leaders as individuals "who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs."[15] Similarly, the leadership model described by Schoenberg and Salmond in "Exploring Leadership," a report from the Girl Scouts Research Institute, encourages youth to take on increasing responsibility, requires them to be involved participants in designing and implementing activities, and explores how youth, like adults, can have an impact in their current environment. This outward focus of leadership mirrors many Northern models of adult leadership where leaders are recognized for the task that they perform or position that they hold.[16]

It is important to distinguish though that even with this kind of a definition of what it means to lead, youth leadership models are not always about creating future executives, politicians and managers. Their primary roles are to develop young people's abilities to manage a group or a task in the present. For example, according to Schoenberg and Salmond and The Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute,[17] youth leaders are not youth who are being prepared to play a role at some point in the future but rather are working to have an impact now. As stated by Kathy Cloninger, CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA, "In Girl Scouts, leadership isn't just about building future leaders—it's about building girl leaders for today."[18] If successful, it is presumed that these qualities will follow them into their adult lives as well.

Although the idea of young people as today's leaders fits well in Northern societies where young people have very public roles in everyday life, the same may not be said for many parts of the developing world. In many contexts, children and young people are discouraged from managing tasks or organizing others as a matter of deference to elders in their communities and families. Traditional cultural beliefs in many parts of the world tend to make it even less likely that girls would be encouraged to participate in a leaders-for-today type leadership model. This subtle difference may have significant impact on how leadership development programs are structured and thought of in developing country contexts.

An alternative approach to thinking about leadership for young people in developing countries may be to reflect on a competency or characteristics-type model of leadership development. In these types of programs, organizations underscore a set of characteristics, skills, assets, or competencies they seek to help young people develop. There is generally less emphasis on when or how young people choose to develop these competencies, but rather that they develop them and exercise choice about how to use them. For instance, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) captures positive youth development in the four Cs: confidence, character, competence, and connection. Confidence is defined as the ability to develop a sense of worth based on a belief in one's ability to make a positive difference in one's life and in the world, by making choices and taking initiatives. Character is defined as having a sense of responsibility and accountability, self-control, and resilience. Connection refers to having a positive relationship with caring adults and peers and with their community. Finally, competence refers to a youth's ability to play a meaningful role in the future by having sound educational and vocational skills. Such a model is more closely aligned with current educational models that have moved school systems around the world from measuring student achievement solely by memory recall and exam outcomes, to recognition of competency development.

These models (defining leadership by an action and defining leadership as competencies) may also be blended. Hart et al. shows how this may be done. The authors define leadership as "the capacity to guide others in the achievement of a common goal"[19]—reflecting the outward focus of an act of managing a process or task discussed earlier. However, they also identify specific leadership skills, including determination, organization aptitude, focus, tolerance, decisiveness, self-discipline, charisma, time management, self-confidence, social competence, communicating a vision, and sensitivity to the needs of others. Similarly, Girl Scouts of the USA outlines a model for girls' leadership that views self-discovery and interpersonal connections as required antecedents to action for girl leaders. The model recognizes identifying communal need, cooperation and advocacy as hallmarks of a successful leader.[20]

Importantly, leadership models for girls and for boys may also have critical differences. For instance, the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) notes that the youth development field is moving away from the model of one individual leader to a model of shared leadership. According to GSRI, this more inclusive and empowering approach is the one girls value most. In their research with girls in North America, the GSRI also states, "Girls recognize that leadership needs to change in order to fully engage them. The traditional command and control approach to leadership does not appeal to girls and their desire to improve their world."[21]

3.2 Girls' Leadership Models: What Elements Need to be in Place for Them to Succeed?

Even though the substance of why youth leadership may be important or what young people should get out of a program may not be universally agreed upon, some characteristics or pre-conditions for good youth leadership programs seem to arise repeatedly in the literature. Schoenberg and Salmond identify several phrases that describe the core elements of youth leadership: youth engagement, youth-driven, youth participation, youth

voice, and youth action. According to them, leadership can be developed at any age, although there can be different levels of leadership depending on the girls' age and stage of development. The following discussion reflects on some characteristics of programs critical to the success of girls' leadership development in particular.[22]

3.2.1 Transformational Leadership Opportunities

Girls' leadership programs appear to be more successful when in addition to providing the opportunities for acts of leadership, they also include structured activities for self-reflection and discovery. These "transformational" leadership opportunities are ones in which youth can see how their efforts make change happen in their communities. In an article by Currie, et al., the authors state that girls must be well acquainted with themselves and critical of the status quo in order to lead. They "equate critical reflexivity with empowerment because it might enable girls to challenge discourses that help sustain women's subordination to men."[23]

In developing country contexts, such critical reflexivity could come with considerable risk to girls, who could pay a high price for questioning patriarchal norms that subjugate women and girls—sometimes even as a matter of law. However, experience from various organizations shows that this kind of critical reflection can still be done in safe spaces where relationships and the enabling environment are set up to support girls and manage expectations for the change that they can make in their world. For example, CARE's experience with a social learning curriculum in India helps children in the 10- to 14-year-old age group reflect on critical social issues in the classroom by combining classroom activities with real-life experiences. A social studies lesson may be an opportunity to learn about gender equality; a word problem in a math class may reinforce constitutional rights and access to the law for all citizens. These critical reflections are done in the presence of a caring adult, and boys and girls are involved in the lesson so that champions for girls' rights are being made of both sexes.

Opportunities for shared leadership that can have a transformational impact on communities resurface when discussing characteristics of effective youth programming. For girls, who deeply value social connections with others, this seems to be particularly true.[24] While traditionally, "Youth programs have sought to serve youth as passive recipients, young people are now taking an active role in their personal and leadership development in organizations with a youth leadership approach."[25] As youths emerge as leaders, their tendency for transformational leadership becomes evident. As *The Language of Online Leadership: Gender and Youth Engagement on the Internet* points out: adults are more likely to develop into leaders based on the traits and abilities of the leader; whereas "youth leaders emerge in community-based organizations through the process of identifying with, and dedicating themselves to, the community in which they participate."[26] Melvin Delgado and Lee Staples embrace this new movement of youth-led organizing in their book, *Youth Led Community Organizing: Theory and Action*. Delgado and Staples view youth leadership as a "burgeoning movement that empowers young people while simultaneously enabling them to make substantive contributions to their communities [that] is increasingly receiving attention from scholars, activists, and the media."[27]

The example of the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI) makes this general point of transformational leadership again. The program, sponsored by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development and 12 community-based organizations, focused on building the capacity of organizations working with marginalized youth and used civic action as a youth development approach.[28] Research findings also show that opportunities for youth participation, such as through civic activism, is "instrumental to their development and the types of transitions they make to adulthood," especially as future citizens.[29]

3.2.2 Leadership Connections to Educational Settings

While there is a preponderance of research on the use of formal schools to promote girls' education, there is little on teaching leadership within the formal school setting. One article that does discuss in-school programming for developing girl leaders is "Partnerships for Success,"[30] which describes the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, New York, a single-sex, public school for grades 7 through 12. The school, established for motivated girls who are committed to working hard and accepting responsibility for personal and civic leadership, emphasizes inquiry learning, with a heavy emphasis on written and oral expression. Students are given many opportunities to learn how to lead and collaborate with others in a supportive environment. Opportunities to apply the skills and experiences in real-life community settings are a related strategy. Girls actively participate in projects that "build their leadership skills, their ability to work in a team, and their capacity to contribute to their community." The program also offers before- and after-school activities, with library, tutoring and test preparation, and leadership lectures, where business leaders, community representatives, role models, and mentors come to teach leadership and life lessons during the school year and a two-week summer enrichment program.

Another school-based program is the After School Girls' Leadership (ASGL) Program, a program for 6th to 8th grade girls in Seattle, Washington.[31] This program is intended to transform schools that are perceived to be hostile to girls and may contribute to various unhealthy outcomes, including persistent low self-esteem, unfavorable self-image, a reduced sense of safety in school, academic underachievement, decreased confidence and achievement in math and science, and higher levels of depression. The goal is to create schools where girls thrive and become leaders and transforming forces in their communities. The program creates a partnership that addresses social work, public health, and education

professions. A 12-week after-school program is based on a "developmental asset"[32] model where girls are connected to caring adults and benefit from critical thinking and working together to solve problems. A democratic school environment emphasizing open communication, caring, and trust provides the backdrop. During focus-group interviews, participating girls and their parents indicated that the benefits of being involved in the program related to understanding the "nitty-gritty" of leadership and making decisions when practicing leadership.

Although these examples are both from the United States, one can quickly see the possible application of leadership development activities in classrooms. Many programs in the developing world are already using girls' leadership activities to advance educational outcomes. For example, in Mali, a girls' mentoring and life-skills program was one of five activities implemented under the USAID-supported Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) Project to address inequities in educational access, retention and achievement.[33] Similarly, CARE has programs in Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, and Tanzania that use leadership development

activities for school girls.[34] Given restrictions on free time for girls in developing countries, school-based models of leadership development certainly deserve a closer look in program design and policy implementation that aim to promote girls' leadership.

3.2.3 Safe Spaces and Caring Adults

Much of the literature on girls' leadership reports on programs that provide safe spaces outside of the formal school setting. For example, the U.S.-based Girls Inc. was started over 140 years ago "to usher in a new generation of leadership." Guided by the vision, "Empowered Girls and an Equitable Society," Girls Inc. has provided supportive spaces for girls to "be themselves and discover their full potentials" for generations of young teens. Girl Scouts of the USA has provided safe spaces for developing girl leaders since it was established in 1912. Girl Scouts' new initiative, the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience, introduces a model that "engages girls in discovering themselves, connecting with others, and taking action to make the world a better place."[35] Girl Scout experiences are girl-led as much as possible, with scout leaders to guide and encourage experiential and cooperative learning. The YWCA and the 4-H Club also offer programs that give girls a voice; help build their self-confidence and organizational and decision-making skills; and allow them to lead others in translating an idea into a practical result and playing an active, contributing role in their communities. Safe spaces help girls have an outlet in which to share ideas and learn from each other.

A safe environment is integral to fostering young leaders, as are proper role models and mentors. Adults can administer and enforce policies that ensure that the situational factors are conducive for girls' leadership. Jill Sperandio's research in Uganda has uncovered an environment where young girls lack adult role-modeling, advocacy, protection and confidence. This lack of attention from adults results in an environment where girls are abused and subordinated, continuing a cyclic pattern of physical and structural violence.[36]

In order to ensure a safe environment that fosters girls' leadership, adults must model the leadership characteristics they hope to foster in the youths with whom they work. One way to accomplish this is for adults to let go of their control and trust girls to govern themselves. The adult assumes a facilitator's role only. The Young Women's Leadership Alliance in Santa Cruz put this model to work in one of their after school programs. The adults involved were simply guides in the process. The girls developed their own community and took responsibility for leadership on their own.

As noted above, in many developing countries, historically one's propensity for leadership has been defined by social roles deeply entrenched in culture. The Role Theory of Leadership loosely speaks to this phenomenon. Leadership roles are defined and facilitated by expectations of others. Youths, specifically girls, may not see themselves in a leadership role because their society does not consider them potential leaders. Girls' leadership models must overcome this barrier and encourage the inclusion of leadership in girlhood. This cannot happen without a critical mass of supportive mentors and champions for girls.

The importance of building these networks of support for girls' leadership is also underscored by other organizations. UNICEF has girls' empowerment (GEM) clubs, with program elements that seem to echo those of girls' leadership. Through informative sessions, peer-to-peer counseling, and other activities, girls learn life skills and assertiveness, build self-confidence, and get support for speaking out against things they see need to change. Although the word leadership is not mentioned, GEM club members do raise awareness and spur peers and community members to action. The critical importance of supportive relationships is clear in these examples.

The Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) program offered by Peace Corps shows how the out-of-school, safe-spaces strategy can be implemented in the developing world. GLOW includes camps designed "to encourage young women to become active citizens by building self-esteem and confidence, increasing self-awareness, and developing skills in goal setting, assertion, and career planning." Although each camp reflects the unique characteristics and diversity of the local community, all share similar principles and themes: developing leadership skills, improving self-esteem, increasing knowledge of women's health issues, and respecting one another. GLOW camps promote the belief that every young woman can make a difference in her community and offer adolescent girls self-development opportunities in a fun and friendly atmosphere.

The creation of these various types of safe spaces and support from caring adults highlights the fact that many communities do not place as strong an emphasis on girls' rights as they do other members of society. Safe spaces allow girls to have an outlet to freely express themselves and in so doing not only recognize their individuality, but also find their voice. With the help of thoughtful mentors, girls are more likely to speak out and try their leadership skills. This will help girls develop the confidence they need to increase their leadership abilities. These environments foster space for girls to speak freely and engage in activities without fear or shame.

3.3 Definition of Leadership: What Did the Experts Say?

Given the limitations of the literature, nearly thirty experts[37] with experience in developing country programming were interviewed to help strengthen the definitions and understanding of girls' leadership models.

The first question in the key informant interviews was: What is your definition of girls' leadership? In many ways, the findings from the key informant interviews mirrored those of the literature review. One respondent defined girls' leadership as an innate ability and several emphasized that not all girls are interested in leadership. Most respondents, however, were of the opinion that leadership is an ability or behavior that can be developed, given good mentors and a supportive environment.

In describing girls' leadership, responses were organized into five categories: voice, decision-making, confidence, organization and vision, the characteristics mentioned by most respondents. These five categories follow the competency-based definitions of leadership described in the previous section, and can be closely matched to other competency or skill-based leadership development models.

Statements interpreted as voice were often the first responses from interviewees, indicating that a girl is able to engage in a rational process to arrive at an opinion and believes she has the right to express that opinion. This paper has given this characteristic a full title of voice/assertion. One respondent

Table 1: Characteristics of Girl Leaders

Characteristics	# of Respondents Who Mentioned It	Description of the Characteristic
Voice/Assertion	8	Can articulate thoughts and make decisions, has her own voice, knows she has the right to an opinion, able to be critical, to ask questions, and to be assertive.
Decision-making/Action	10	A sense that her decisions matter in her own life, can solve problems, can create opportunities for herself; believes that in acting on her decisions she can influence both her destiny and that of others.
Self-confidence	10	Believing in herself.
Organization	5	Able to organize herself to achieve her goals; able to take something from an idea to a final product.
Vision/Ability to Motivate Others	8	Able to bring people together to accomplish something, to direct how to translate an idea into a practical result, to play an active social role in the community.

advised that, "Girls need to learn how to exercise their power, such as how to behave when they find themselves in compromising situations."

Often, after voice, respondents talked about decision-making. They emphasized that a girl leader knows that her decisions matter for herself, for her future, and, often, for others. Closely related to decision-making and action is the characteristic of self-confidence. Self-confidence is an attitude that can be defined as self-assuredness in one's judgment, abilities and power. It implies optimism and independence and describes the way in which a person expresses herself, makes decisions, and takes action. Included in self-confidence is what one respondent expressed as, "They see the world as open to their potential," another as "having a sense of place in the world," and another as "having aspirations and hope for a future."

Organization was described as the ability to organize oneself to achieve a goal and to be able to take something from an idea to a final product. For this characteristic, respondents made it clear that organizational ability could be demonstrated either at the individual or group levels. For groups, the characteristic was described as the ability to bring people together to accomplish something and to direct how to translate an idea into a practical result.

The four previously described characteristics can apply to individual self-actualization or to group leadership. The final characteristic, vision /ability to motivate others, is what distinguishes a group leader from an individual leading a directed life. Vision allows a girl to bring people together to accomplish something, to direct the realization of a result, or to play an active social role in the community.

With a developing country context in mind, this constellation of five characteristics—voice, decision-making, self-confidence, organization, and vision—describes the girl leader for the key informants. Two additional characteristics, although mentioned by only two or three individuals, are also of high importance: economic involvement and ethical, value-based decision-making. Although they do not show up in the preceding list of characteristics of a girl leader, they are included later among the strategies for forming a leader.

The characteristics of a girl leader that emerged in the interviews could also be a description of "positive youth development." This description of the girl leader is comparable to descriptions of positive youth development in other organizations, such as the International Youth Foundation's model described in

the previous section. The interviewees also helped to shed light on what may distinguish a girl leader from a girl that simply is participating in a leadership program. Many girls may show voice, decision-making, confidence, and organization; but a more limited number will show the characteristic we have called vision and have the ability and desire to motivate others to follow. Again, these findings point toward a hybrid understanding of leadership as the act that a girl carries out and the competencies that she develops. The competencies or characteristics identified by the key informants also reinforce the idea that formal education systems should have a role to play in building future girl leaders through competency-based models of student achievement; they reinforce competency-based models of leadership.

4 Empowerment and Leadership

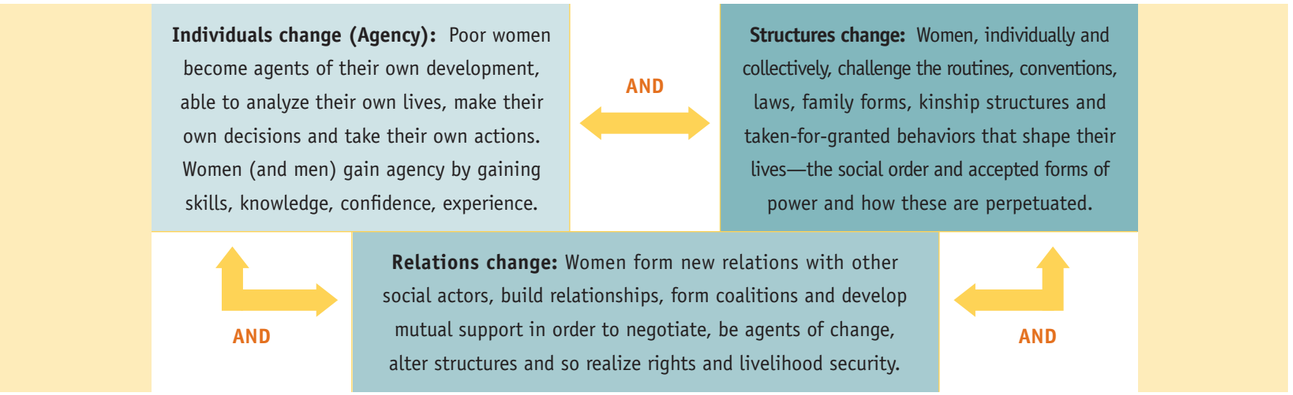
In the literature review and expert discussions, notions of leadership and their overlap with empowerment was a reoccurring theme. It is clear, particularly in a developing country context, that it is not possible to address effective leadership for girls without nesting that discussion in a broader understanding of what empowerment for girls may mean. For this reason, the section that follows presents a framework for promoting gender empowerment, and gives some general reflections on what it means for a successful girls' leadership model.

In order to explore the linkages between leadership and empowerment further, a model for gender empowerment developed by CARE is presented below.[38] This empowerment approach addresses three inter-connecting aspects of social change: agency (individuals' agency or their ability to change and affect change), structures and human relationships. All of these aspects are considered key factors in the construction and entrenchment of poverty and gender discrimination. Change—in this case, improvement in the physical, economic, political or social well-being of girls and women—will not be sustained unless programming addresses all three components of the framework change—individuals, structures and relations. Provided below in Figure 1 is an overview of CARE's gender empowerment framework.

This model for gender empowerment also holds true for girls' leadership experiences. As pointed out in the literature and by key informants, girls cannot begin to exercise greater leadership in their communities (or perhaps even develop leadership competencies) without being more empowered. It is not that one develops before the other, but rather that they develop in parallel, where girls who show leadership are more empowered, and greater empowerment enables girls to express their leadership.

While empowerment is not the only precondition for leadership development, it is a critical one, and if leadership development work is to be accomplished in developing countries, program planners must have a full understanding of how empowerment of girls

Figure 1: CARE's Gender Empowerment Framework



may be accomplished. Program activities cannot stop at the individual change level of girls, instead, concerted efforts also have to be given to developing activities that seek changes in structures and promote supportive relationships for girls. In fact, all three elements are already reflected in the review of girls' leadership presented by the literature and experts opinion by underscoring the following: competency development (individual change); mentors and champions (relations change); and safe spaces (structural change).

5 Presentation of a Model for Girls' Leadership Development in the Developing World

The preceding discussion gives a rich basis for beginning to form a model for girls' leadership development in the developing world. The review of leadership and expert opinions underscore the usefulness of a competency-based model of girls' leadership where shared and transformative leadership is valued and upheld. Moreover, the acknowledgement that leadership and empowerment of girls must progress simultaneously reinforces a need to focus on structural and relationship changes for girls, not only her own skills. The section that follows will present a definition for girls' leadership and implications for that definition that can be contextually appropriate. Given this definition, the section will then go on to explain the pathway to the development of girl leaders.

5.1 Definition of Girls' Leadership

Based on the literature review, consultation with experts and frameworks presented above, the definition of a girl leader is as follows:

A girl leader is an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change.

Reflecting on the literature, more detail has been added to this definition to help clearly articulate how a girl leader may achieve the change referenced in the definition above. That detail consists of three pillars that seemed to come out repeatedly in our investigation of girls' leadership and help ensure the definition is contextually appropriate. These three pillars are: realizing the power within, gaining legitimacy and taking action; and they closely mirror the three elements around gender empowerment. Credit is given to the Girl Scout Research Institute for creating the contours of these pillars. The pillars are described in the section that follows.

5.1.1 Realizing the Power Within

This first pillar of girls' leadership corresponds most closely to a girls' own sense of agency. Activities and actions in this part of a girls' leadership model are focused on developing the following five competencies in girls:

1. **Confidence** A confident girl is aware of her opinions, goals and abilities, and acts to assert herself in order to influence and change her life and world.
2. **Voice/Assertion** A girl who has found her voice is comfortable sharing her thoughts and ideas with others, and knows she has the right to do so.
3. **Decision-making/Action** A girl who demonstrates sound decision-making understands that her own decisions matter for herself, for her future, and, often, for others.
4. **Organization** A girl with organization skills is able to organize herself and her actions in order to accomplish a goal, and to take an idea and put it into reality.
5. **Vision and ability to motivate others** A girl with a strong and clear vision and who is able to motivate others brings people together to accomplish a task.

5.1.2 Gaining Legitimacy

The second pillar recognizes the importance of a girls' relationship to others. It is not possible for girls to work in isolation or strive to be lone leaders. The research presented above reinforces that acceptance from the family, the community and peers is essential for girls to develop leadership skills. As such, one of the key components of developing leadership is the formation of girls' social networks. These networks serve as hubs where girls learn to analyze, plan, work together and practice their emerging skills. The networks are a critical step in

creating more places where girls can be heard and try out new skills. For this model of girls' leadership, we have chosen to term this broad effort as gaining legitimacy in public spaces, as we recognize in many developing countries, girls need support to legitimately be seen and heard in public arenas.

Equally important to having legitimacy in public spaces is having the mentors and role models who can stand up for girls' rights. For generations, mentoring has been used to create a sustained relationship between a trusted teacher and a student, whether male or female. Mentoring can play an important role in developing confidence, improving academic ability, and avoiding unhealthy situations.[39] Research by the Big Brothers Big Sisters Association showed that mentors, acting in roles that are not traditionally authoritative, such as teachers or parents, can help youth share ideas and in so doing establish ownership of their actions. In addition, mentoring improved youths' relationships with teachers and parents. It also helped youth engage their peers more often and establish solid relationships. Mentored youth developed stronger senses of self that enabled them to feel confident in interactive situations with adults and similarly aged friends.

5.1.3 Taking Action

The final pillar requires an appropriate structure or enabling environment for girls. As referenced in the definition presented by this paper of girls' leadership, the core of developing girl leaders is teaching them to act in a way that has a positive influence on their lives and the lives of family and community members. These actions are not spontaneous good deeds; rather, they speak to the types of "transformational leadership" mentioned in the literature. Opportunities for civic engagement are important to help motivate girls, place them in public spheres in safe ways, gather support for their rights and underscore their needs, and help girls develop a better understanding of citizenship and empathy.

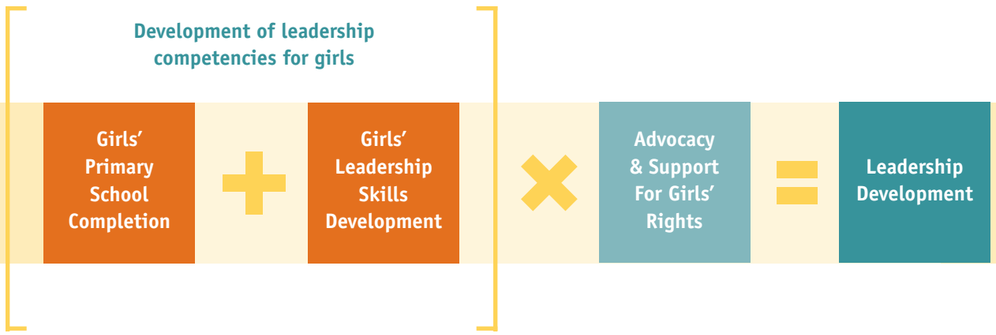
5.2 The Pathway to Girls' Leadership

Given the definition of what a girls' leadership program would seek to achieve, this section is meant to articulate how to go about it. It lays out a specific theory of change, based on the literature, and identifies several pathways to change. These pathways for change are predicated on the fact that, providing adequate education and leadership development, reinforced by an enabling environment that embraces girls' rights, can help girls to better articulate their needs, protect their personal assets, participate in decision-making, and, overall, shape their futures.

5.2.1 A Theory of Change

As mentioned in the definition of girls' leadership adopted in this paper, the development of leadership competencies is critical to the development of girl leaders. Likewise, advocacy and support are fundamental to helping girls successfully exercise their competencies. This leads to the theory of change for how leadership development occurs as presented below. Three main domains of change work together to enable leadership development: girls' primary school completion, girls' leadership skills development, and advocacy and support for girls' rights. Though represented linearly here for purposes of the theory of change, each of these three domains is mutually reinforcing.

Figure 2: A Theory of Change for Girls' Leadership Development



The theory posits that girls develop leadership competencies in primary school as well as through specific activities to develop leadership skills outside the school environment. This inside/outside formal structures approach suggests that basic rights to education supplemented by enrichment activities are the best ways to reinforce leadership skills. Moreover, access to the intellectual and social benefits of basic education ensures the protection and fulfillment of the rights of girls and increases the range of life choices available to them as women.[40] Ensuring marginalized girls have equal educational opportunities is also one of the most important and powerful steps towards challenging gender discrimination. Specific leadership development opportunities outside the classroom also equip girls to increase their participation in decisions affecting development processes. Furthermore, the ability to exercise those competencies as leaders is multiplied when paired with advocacy and support for girls; thus providing supportive relationships and an enabling environment for leadership skills to take root.

5.2.2 Domains of Change and Their Pathways

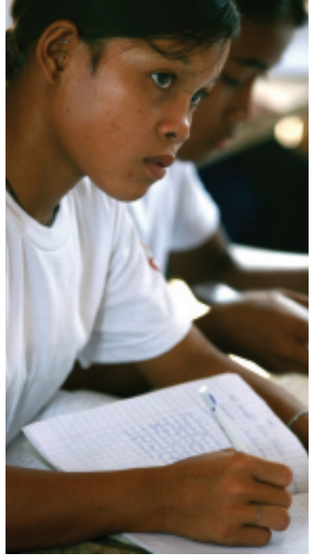
A theory of change presents a general hypothesis about how transformational processes can occur. To help translate this into strategies for programming in girls' leadership development for this age group, a set of ten pathways to change have been identified. These pathways represent specific leverage points, referenced in the literature, about how to accelerate each of the three domains presented in the theory of change. This list is not exhaustive. Instead, it is designed to be selective and somewhat focused in order to test the theory of change over time. The figure below and text that follows gives a summary of the three domains of change and the ten pathways:

Figure 3: Theory of Change for Girls' Leadership Development

Girls' Primary School Completion

1. Equitable, quality education: This pathway includes activities to ensure that education processes, content and environments support learning for all girls and boys. It also acknowledges that students come to schools with different needs, and that getting children into school is not enough—there must be learning involved as well. Above all, equitable, quality education ensures school systems treat all learners with dignity and respect, regardless of gender, culture or socioeconomic status; thus allowing them to build a foundation for leadership competencies.

2. School transitions: School transitions include a child's transition from preschool into primary school and, eventually, post-primary school options. Experts recognize that these transitions are critical periods in a child's educational development. When a child has access to early childhood development experiences,



he or she is more likely to excel in primary school and less likely to drop out. The age before primary school is also a critical time in brain development, when proper stimulation and support can have long-lasting benefits. Safe, quality post-primary school options are equally important to ensuring that children find school relevant and engaging. These post-primary options help students and families see the importance of education during a child's life when leadership skills are expanded, deepened and sustained.

3. Learning opportunities for older girls: An important strategy for increasing the number of girls who complete primary school is to address the learning needs of those who have missed the chance to start school on time or who have dropped out. Too often, these children are simply left to join the ranks of illiterate adults. Moreover, in alternative educational settings, girls are often exposed to new leadership settings through same-sex classrooms, accelerated learning programs, residential programs and flexible school hours.

4. Gender-sensitive policies and programs: The enabling environment for girls is critical, including gender-friendly school programs, budgeting practices and legal frameworks governing enrollment and completion policies. Specific activities such as efforts to pass laws prohibiting school-based gender discrimination, projects that address gender-based violence in schools and budget monitoring to ensure that provisions are made for girls' education are all strategies that help to ensure girls have the proper enabling environment to complete their primary education.

Girls' Leadership Skills Development

5. Diverse extracurricular activities for girls: Girls must have outlets outside of school where they can develop their social skills, intellect and leadership through supervised activities. Formal mentors and organized activities provide a structured environment to support girls and help engage boys in seeing them in leadership roles. Usually sanctioned by the community, these extra-curricular activities are also culturally appropriate ways to help girls think about asserting their voice in new ways.

6. Social networks for girls: Having a connection with other girls and not being socially isolated can be of equal importance to learning skills. In collectives and groups, through the development of "safe spaces" girls have an opportunity to learn by taking on leadership roles themselves and also by observing their peers in those roles. In addition, peer networks teach girls how to resolve conflict, deal with setbacks and become more accepting of others.

7. Girls' participation in voluntary civic action: As discussed in the review of literature, transformative leadership opportunities appear to make for more successful programs. As such, a pathway for developing leadership skills is the participation in activities associated with promoting citizenship. Voluntary civic action helps girls to be seen and heard in the community, and it stimulates a general spirit of community goodwill. Furthermore, it engages the community by deepening their stake in the growth and development of girls. Activities around civic action provide girls with the experience they need to later participate as citizens who assert their rights and hold leaders accountable in their communities and countries.

Girls' Rights Are Upheld

8. Attention to harmful traditional practices: As discussed previously, children, particularly girls, are too often constrained by social expectations. Not only can these expectations limit a child's vision of his or her future, they can also cause emotional or physical harm. For example, practices such as early marriage, female genital cutting (FGC), violent initiation rites for boys and exploitative child labor can deeply affect a child's future aspirations as well as his or her social and physical mobility. Furthermore, conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity can place burdens on both sexes that can inhibit equitable relationships. By calling attention to harmful traditional practices, the theory of change directly confronts how social constructs support or hinder girls.

9. Reduction of risk and vulnerability: The effects of HIV/AIDS, conflict, natural disasters, land loss, food insecurity, unemployment, discrimination and poor health undoubtedly keep girls from reaching their full potential. Reducing risk and vulnerability of girls can have dramatic impacts on the enabling environment for girls—allowing them to more freely test out new leadership competencies.

10. Role models, mentors and champions for girls: The final pathway that has been identified recognizes the need for girl advocates through relationships with individuals and institutions that can help make a lasting difference in children's lives. As reflected in the literature review, if girls are to emerge as leaders in their homes and communities, they need people to look up to, and they need people who will help their voices be heard.

5.2.3 The Role of Men and Boys

Recognizing the position of power and influence men hold in most societies and building on the gender empowerment framework, men and boys must be enlisted as agents of community change. As pointed out by many key informants, men and boys hold both formal and informal leadership positions—as religious leaders, clan heads and teachers, among others. Boys and men can act as community role models, changing their peers' perceptions of gender, as well as acting as agents of change that support and enforce gender-

sensitive policies and laws. Engaging men and boys helps create awareness of gender marginalization issues and provides opportunities for challenging existing gender norms and attitudes. Additionally, gender marginalization negatively affects boys and men by forcing them to conform to particular societal standards.[41]

In many societies, traditional gender roles place women and girls below men and boys in social status. This leads to decreased access to school or, for those girls who do go to school, increased workloads from both academic and domestic chores. Other research shows that the power afforded males in a society can lead to abuse. Many male teachers use their positions of authority to sexually harass and abuse girls.[42] This can turn schools into unsafe spaces for girls. Working directly with men and boys as champions of girls' rights can help decrease abuse and allow girls equal access to school and equitable treatment.

Stereotypical gender roles also place girls in situations of high-risk sexual behavior. This can lead to girls contracting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, unwanted pregnancy, poor school performance and low self-esteem. Because girls in many communities are vulnerable to early pregnancy and complications around sexual relations such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and mental health issues, focusing on gender equity can help reduce the risks for both boys and girls.[43]

It is important to recognize not only the role that boys and men play in spurring change in the area of gender equality but also their role in resisting change. By creating awareness around gender-marginalization issues and in providing opportunities for challenging existing gender norms and attitudes, boys and men are better able to recognize and reflect on harmful gender practices, thereby creating a real opportunity for change in male behavior and attitudes that negatively affect women and girls.

6 Conclusion

The dearth of evidence from the developing world about girls' leadership underscores the importance of more research in this field. While youth leadership programs exist in Northern societies and produce a variety of models based on experience, this is not the case in many developing nations. As evidenced from this paper, several factors can contribute to the development of programs that strive to enhance the leadership skills of girls. Because the definitions and models of youth leadership programs vary greatly, this literature review and subsequent discussion with experts exposes the importance of leadership competency development. From this, a model of girls' leadership based on promoting the power within, gaining legitimacy and taking action can be envisioned.

To realize that vision of leadership, a pathway to change can be drawn out that values the role primary school education has in a girls' life at this age, as well as her ability to interact in structured activities that build her leadership skills. Together, these two things can combine to develop the kinds of leadership competencies we expect to see in young girl leaders—voice/assertion, confidence, decision making, organization and vision. At the same time, we see that these skills must be multiplied in order to have a real effect on girls' leadership development. This is where the importance of advocacy for girls' rights, gender equality and transforming gender dynamics are critical to creating the supportive relations and enabling environment girls need.

Additionally, while education remains an important, but not solitary, factor that feeds a supportive environment and advocacy network for girls, adequate health care, nutrition and protection from economic and sexual exploitation also are important. The development of leadership skills will help girls live healthy lives for themselves and their families by providing them with the knowledge and ability to make informed decisions

regarding their health. Education, combined with exercises that develop self-awareness and confidence, gives girls tools with which they can seek gainful employment and become productive members of society. Additionally, these tools make them less vulnerable to manipulation by men.

On the national level, government and other established entities should be among the groups that are advocating for and supporting change for girls. Implementing policies that assist girls in accessing and completing school provide methods for skills development and economic viability that ultimately help the development of the entire nation. Moreover, support for girls leadership initiatives on a country-wide level help overcome barriers for girls as they grow older and navigate through public life. As girl leaders develop, they will feed back into the system, providing skills, advocacy and support to their families, their communities and their countries.

Finally, a set of breakthroughs seem to show some promise about how we can actually make programming decisions to promote girls' leadership. They cluster around improving the chances of girls in this age group of completing primary school (through provision of equitable quality education, better school transitions, availability of learning opportunities for older girls and more gender-sensitive policies) and programs being enacted by decision makers and duty bearers. A second cluster of breakthroughs recognizes that girls' leadership development should be through formal structured opportunities (extra-curricular activities), increased social networks and participation in civic action. Breakthroughs that promote girls rights—specifically reduction of harmful traditional practices, ending types of risk and vulnerability that plague girls, and finding role models, mentors and champions all stand to have lasting affects on girls' leadership. Above all, men and boys must be effectively engaged in this process.

There are no simple solutions to promoting girls' leadership among young adolescents. However, this paper has described some basic tenants of what we can do based on what we know as well as some areas for further exploration. With more attention to their voices, empowered girls will lead.

Annex 1: A List of Key Informant Interviewees by Affiliation

Affiliation	Name
1. No Affiliation	Andrea Rugh
2. Academy for Educational Development	May Rihani
3. American Association of University Women	Linda Hallman and others
4. Creative Associates International, Inc.	Jeanne Moulton
5. Creative Associates International, Inc.	Karen Tietjen
6. Commonwealth Secretariat	Jvolsna Jha
7. Desmond Tutu Foundation	Ellen MacDiamid
8. Discovery Channel Global Education Partnership	Tamela Noboa
9. FAWE Rwanda	Odetta Mutanguha
10. Girls Inc.	Marcia Kropf
11. Girl Scouts of the USA	Debra Dodson
12. Girl Scouts of the USA	Judy Schoenberg
13. Global Development for Peace and Education	Clem van Wyk and Kim Williams
14. International Center for Research on Women	Margaret Greene
15. MSI	Joan Goodwin
16. MSI/EQUATE	Christina Rawley
17. Plan USA	Giselle Mitton
18. Population Council	Judith Bruce
19. Save the Children	Alisa Phillips
20. UNESCO	Namtip Aksornkool
21. UNESCO	Eunice Smith
22. UNICEF	Changu Mannathoko
23. USAID	Julie Hansen Swanson
24. World Bank Group	Helen Abadzi
25. World Bank Group	Mercy Tembon
26. World Learning	Marla Solomon
27. World Learning	Jeff Unsicker
28. World Learning	Ken Williams
29. YWCA	Alisa Porter

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