

A MESSAGE FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR





With hundreds of millions of girls at risk of terrible exploitation merely because they are poor and female, the way we treat girls in poverty is the most urgent social issue of our time. But not only that, girls in poverty also represent the best investment we can make to build a better future.

I used to mainly talk about the disturbing things that were happening to girls in poverty, horrific things like being trafficked into brothels or sexually abused at home, or more mundane things like being forced to quit school. At Speak Up we fight aggressively against child marriage, a particularly heinous form or exploitation that sees more than 25,000 girls every day have their futures destroyed. Because of the low view of women around the world, being poor and female can be a terribly difficult burden to overcome.

While the fight against these injustices is real, I've come to realize that there is another beautiful. hopeful side of the equation: girls in poverty are not merely potential victims to be protected but are themselves the future and hope of their family and country. In Bangladesh, a country desperately lacking medical professionals, hundreds of girls in our Girls Education Program want to be doctors or nurses. If we help these young ladies reach their goals, not only will they avoid abusive child marriages but they will themselves be empowered professionals, serving Bangladesh. The same is true for the other professions that our girls commonly want to pursue: lawyers, teachers, police officers, and business-women. Watch out for the day when thousands of girls, previously destined for child marriage, are unleashed to serve

their country. The world will never be the same!

2017 was a challenging, inspiring, and transformational year for Speak Up. Challenging as we transitioned from one major local partner to another in Bangladesh; inspiring as we saw our GEP grow to where we now have 93 young women in either nursing school or college; and transformational as we started pilot projects in both Cambodia and Lebanon.

Our progress in 2017 was made possible by our generous supporters, as we raised enough money to put our Bangladesh work on a strong footing and branch out in new directions. So on behalf of 1250 girls in our Bangladesh GEP; 22 amazing young women at the Alingon Home; and small groups of students in Cambodia and Lebanon, thank you for investing in our work and in the world's best investment: girls in poverty.

2017 was an amazing year of maturity and expansion of our work; the best is yet to come!



Troy Anderson
International Director

BANGLADESH

Our flagship project, the Girls Education Program in Bangladesh, continued to grow and thrive in 2017, with 1250 girls from 30 villages enrolled in our GEP.

CAMBODIA & SYRIA-LEBANON

We began pilot projects in two new countries in 2017. In Cambodia we began funding the university education of four young women from poor villages. In Lebanon, we are partnering with a local NGO to keep 15 Syrian refugee girls in school and out of child marriage and other exploitation, funding for which will start in 2018.

ALINGON HOME

In 2017 we continue our funding partnership with the Alingon Home for girls removed from brothels. We invested \$24,500 to fund the entire operations of Alingon for the 6th year, helping 22 girls and young women have a safe place to live and thrive.



2017 - BANGLADESH - GEP

The most powerful way to change the world for girls in poverty is through education. 30,000 girls are forced into child marriage every day, one every few seconds somewhere around the world. We are changing this reality, and changing lives, by empowering girls in poverty to stay in school and reach their dreams. 1250 girls in Bangladesh, and counting!

In 2017 we expanded our Girls Education Program in Bangladesh to serve girls in 5th grade and higher in 30 villages. Now, 1250 girls and young women have joined our GEP, where they are guaranteed all that they need to stay in school through university, enabling them to reach their highest goals and stay out of child marriage and other forms of violence and exploitation. Girls in rural Bangladesh, often victims of discrimination and abuse, are hungry for an education. By the hundreds they come to our training meetings, eager to receive educational support and for a chance to go to college or nursing school.

Your support provided the following in 2017:

- -- 80 part-time TEACHERS who met with girls 6 days a week to help them with their homework and exam preparation.
- -- LEARNING CENTERS in 24 villages, small structures we built to give girls a safe place to meet with their friends for tutoring and academic support. We use rented space in 6 other villages, and in 2018 will be building more Learning Centers in every village.
- -- 65 young women in our College Program received MONTHLY COLLEGE STIPENDS to pay for their dormitory and tuition fees, including 18 nursing and college students who live in our dormitory for free.
- -- 1250 girls received SCHOOL SUPPLIES, including notebooks, pens, and uniforms.

- -- 24 girls live in our HIGH SCHOOL DORM, giving our brighest young students, and those most at-risk who need to leave their villages for their vulnerable years, a fun place to stay and focus on academic excellence.
- -- A STAFF TEAM of 6 Field Supervisors, similar to social workers, who oversee our work and teachers in all 30 villages.
- -- 25 monthly TRAINING MEETINGS where up to 195 girls in the same grade level met for a day of inspiration and practical training, helping them plan their academic future and prepare for their chosen profession. Even little 6th and 7th graders enjoys days of training and inspiration as they dream of becoming teachers, doctors, nurses and more.
- -- And MUCH MORE... We encourage you to email us, or even plan to come and visit us in Bangladesh, to see a beautiful transformation in the works. Over a thousand families are now confident that their daughters can excel in school and reach their dreams, radically changing the way that entire communities view and treat girls and women.



2017 - CAMBODIA & LEBANON

We were thrilled in 2017 to take our first steps to establish our Girls Education Program outside of Bangladesh. Alongside NGO partners in Cambodia and Lebanon, we are exploring ways to help girls in poverty stay in school and receive a higher education, preparing them for lives of fruitful service.

CAMBODIA

The beautiful country of Cambodia is in some ways still recovering from its turbulent history, and as all over the world, wherever there is poverty, girls get the worst end of the bargain. Thousands of Cambodian girls are still vulnerable to exploitation in the sex industry, while many other girls in poverty drop out of school and are denied an education merely because they are poor and female.

in 2017 we raised funds to pay for 4 young women to attend university, the first women in their families to do so. Many young women in their villages, near the Thailand-Cambodia border, drop out of school and get married young, going to work in bars or factories, places where they are vulnerable to exploitation and unlikely to reach their highest ambitions. By staying in school, delaying marriage and building a strong work ethic, these young ladies will be able to model for their friends what Cambodian girls are capable of doing for their family and village.

Poor Cambodian girls often cross the border into Thailand for underground work, get pregnant quite young, or simply drop out and continue the cycle of female poverty. By supporting our work in Cambodia, you will help us empower many more young women to create a new reality for Cambodia.

LEBANON

As the civil war in neighboring Syria rages on, more than a million refugees have poured into Lebanon, further burdening a country which is already quite vulnerable politically and economically. Life can be very difficult for Syrian refugee girls in Lebanon, as life in a refugee camp with limited privacy leaves them vulnerable to abuse. Being dislocated from a stable community, with little hopes of finishing their education, many Syrian girls are seen as burdens to their family and out of desperation are forced into unwanted child marriages. As is always the case, war and violence and poverty are cruelest to vulnerable girls.

We responded to this crisis in 2017 by partnering with a Lebanese NGO to provide funds to help 15 8th and 9th girls stay in school and receive tutoring and academic support. These 15 young women all dream of returning to Syria to help rebuild their country, in fields as diverse as engineering, social work and the military. We are working with local partners to see how we can best ensure these girls' ability to stay in school, attend university, and one day return to Syria.

The Syrian civil war which you read about every day in the newspaper has direct effects on girls fleeing from violence and exploitation. With your help, we are doing our part to give Syrian refugee girls a chance to succeed.



OUR FINANCES

Thanks to a growing roster of more than 600 donors, our income has steadily grown over the past several years, enabling our Girls Education Program in Bangladesh to grow exponentially.

	2015	2016	2017
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 222,731	\$ 366,285	\$ 408,833
EXPENSES			
GEP Bangladesh	\$ 157,352	\$ 226,255	\$ 259,814
Alingon Home	28,877	25,000	24,500
GEP Cambodia	0	0	1,000
Salaries & Related	46,766	45,636	55,594
Travel Expenses	10,846	9,213	13,670
USA Office	16,314	3,911	4,341
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 260,155	\$ 310,015	\$ 358,919
NET INCOME	\$ (37,424)	\$ 56,270	\$ 49,914
NET ASSETS	\$ 55,176	\$ 110,272	\$ 160,342

FINANCIAL NOTES

- 1. The bulk of our net assets carried over from 2017 are (a) funding for the early months of 2018 when new-year education expenses are higher than monthly averages and will not be covered by current-month donations, and (b) a \$50,000 Reserve Fund which is being invested to ensure our long-term financial viability as hundreds of girls will go to college in the coming years, necessitating a major growth in expenses starting in 2020.
- 2. Detailed information from our annual 990 IRS filings can be found on our website.

PLANS FOR 2018 AND BEYOND...

Our 2018 plans are underway, with lots in store for Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lebanon and beyond....

- ** 93 young women started 2018 in either nursing school or college in our Bangladesh GEP. 15 first-year college students moved into our Khulna city dorm.
- ** We hired 79 teachers for our Bangladesh GEP, 15 of whom work full-time overseeing work in several villages each.
- ** 37 young women will finish there HSC exams in April, and most of them will move to Khulna city for college in December this year.
- ** We are laying plans for a Career Center for college girls in Bangladesh, giving them a place for training and to earn income as tutors.
- ** We are working with our NGO partners in Cambodia and Lebanon to ensure long-term support for girls in both countries.
- ** We will continue supporting the Alingon Home for the foreseeable future.
- ** We will hire our first staff in the USA, including a grant-writer, to take our fundraising to the next level, and establish small offices in Los Angeles and Seattle.
- ** Our goal is to increase our income from \$408,000 in 2017 to at least \$650,000 in 2018, strengthening our current work and allowing for future expansion.
- ** Besides our major annual events in Seattle and Los Angeles, in 2018 we plan to have smaller events in Colorado, Missouri, Texas, Florida, Washington, DC and more.



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