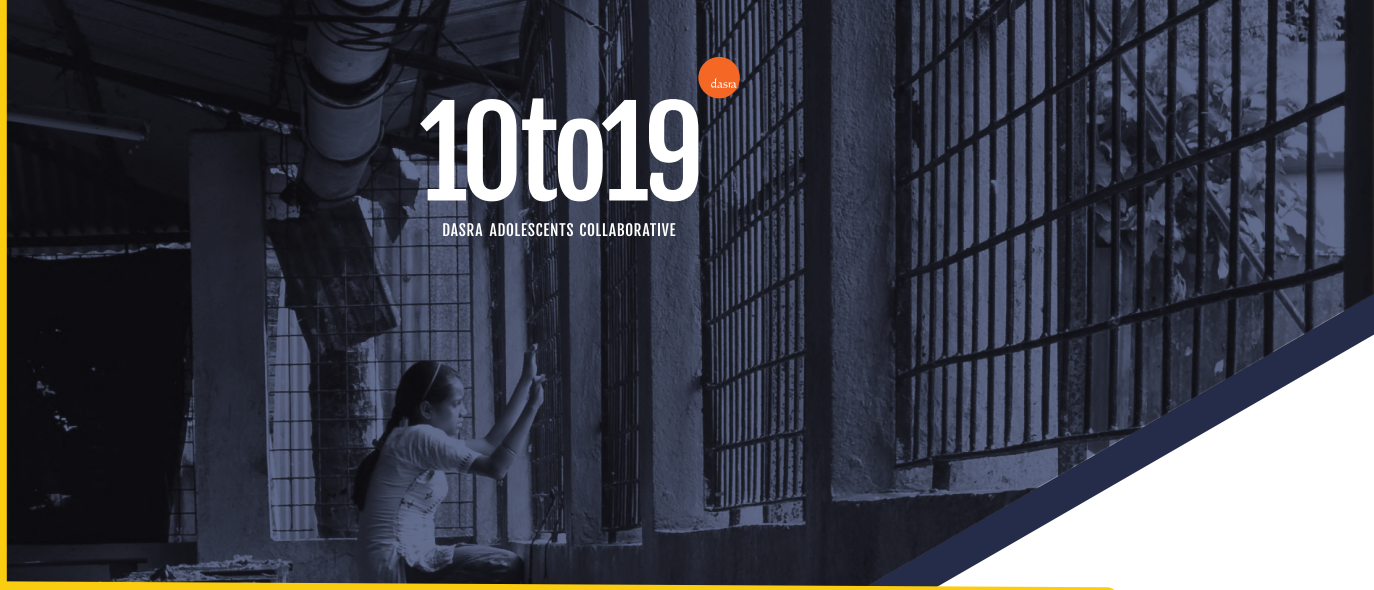


10to19

DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

ACTIONREACTION

AN OVERVIEW

DOCUMENTING BACKLASH FACED BY ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS IN INDIA

108th /149 India ranks **108 out of 149** nations in The Global Gender Gap Index [1]
This poses a serious challenge to achieving **SDG 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS**

19.1% Adolescents and are an especially vulnerable population that comprise **19.1%** of India's population. [2]

27% Girls are married before the age of 18 [3]

#1 India ranks #1 on adolescent pregnancy rates globally [4]

18% Of girls drop out before completing secondary school [5]

WHY FOCUS ON BACKLASH

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) work to empower adolescents and change social norms. As a result, they face tremendous backlash, which impacts both programs, and the adolescents themselves. This backlash has been defined as a negative reaction by gatekeepers of the status quo, towards efforts aimed at changing the status quo.

DASRA'S RESEARCH INDICATES [6]

85%
ORGANIZATIONS REPORTED AT LEAST ONE INCIDENT OF BACKLASH FACED BY THEIR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS FOR DISPLAYING AGENCY

60%
ORGANIZATIONS REPORTED THAT GIRLS WERE DENIED PERMISSION TO ATTEND PROGRAMS BECAUSE THEY TEACH USELESS OR 'DIRTY' THINGS

<50%
ORGANIZATIONS REPORTED INSTANCES OF GIRLS BEING BEATEN OR **DENIED FOOD**, FOR REFUSING TO MARRY AGAINST HER WILL, OR ATTEMPTING TO GAIN LIVELIHOOD SKILLS TO PURSUE A CAREER

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATIONS?

ONE FOURTH

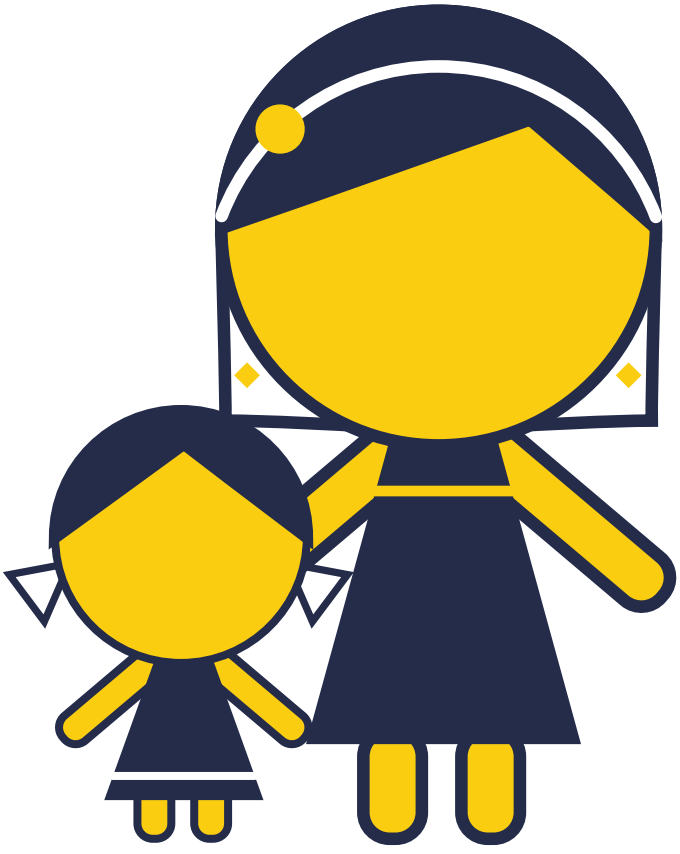
OF ORGANISATIONS

WERE FORCED TO EXCLUDE CONTENT FROM CURRICULUM

WERE REFUSED ENTRY INTO COMMUNITIES

RECEIVED THREATS OF VIOLENCE OR VERBAL ABUSE

WHAT ARE SOME KEY SOURCES OF BACKLASH?



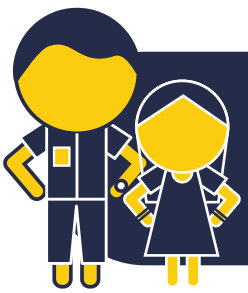
INSTITUTIONS

SCHOOL
HOSPITAL
COURT
POLICE
GOVERNMENT

COMMUNITY

RELIGIOUS LEADER
PANCHAYAT
COMMUNITY LEADER
ASHA WORKER

FAMILY



MOTHER
FATHER
BROTHER
GRANDPARENT

HOW DO ORGANISATIONS DEAL WITH BACKLASH?

BEFORE THE PROGRAM BEGINS

DURING THE PROGRAM

1 STRENGTHEN THE PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- MAP AND ADDRESS KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ECOSYSTEM
- CARRY OUT PRE-EMPTIVE RISK MAPPING
- SECURE BUY-IN FROM COMMUNITY GATEKEEPERS

2 STRIVE FOR INFORMED PROGRAM DESIGN

- TAKE A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LENS
- BUILD TRUST WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS
- HIRE AND TRAIN PROGRAM STAFF FROM THE COMMUNITY
- LEVERAGE SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARIES, SCHOOLS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

3 ACTIVELY MITIGATE BACKLASH

- PROVIDE SUPPORT TO VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF BACKLASH
- ESTABLISH FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL PROTOCOL TO MANAGE BACKLASH
- SEEK SUPPORT FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

4 IMPROVE FUTURE PROGRAM DESIGN

- DOCUMENT CASES OF BACKLASH AND SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
- NORMALIZE OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT BACKLASH
- ADVOCATE WITH FUNDERS AND GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS
- DRIVE SUPPORT FOR COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS THE ECOSYSTEM AROUND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

HOW CAN FUNDERS HELP?

> Enable programs to engage a wide range of gatekeepers, by shifting the focus from outputs to outcomes and providing patient capital.

> Invest in the safety and training of frontline workers, ensuring that they not only understand the issue, but are also equipped to deal with it.

> Prioritize advocacy, partnerships, and a collective approach to tackling a systemic issue.

> Create safe spaces for NGOs to share instances of backlash, through transparent conversations, regular touchpoints and specialized reporting formats.

[1] World Economic Forum – Global Gender Gap Report. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf
[2] [5] Census of India | 2011
[3] NHFS 2015-2016
[4] Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence. (2013) UNFPA. Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/les/pub-pdf/ADOLESCENT%20PREGNANCY_UNFPA.pdf
[6] Dasra 2019 | Action Reaction: Understanding and Overcoming backlash against girls' exercise of agency in India
[7] Dasra 2019 | Action Reaction 2: Documenting Backlash faced by adolescent empowerment programs in India