

Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment



INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, there have been unprecedented gains in improving the lives of the global poor; yet progress has been uneven and women and girls have disproportionately been left behind. They continue to face systemic barriers and discrimination that inhibit their access to resources and increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence and exploitation. PCI understands that empowering women and girls is the key to ending global poverty and achieving gender equality, and that is why they are at the center of our work.

Gender equality and empowerment are pillars of PCI's development approach and a priority focus of the organization's 2020 Strategic Plan. Our programs are implemented in close alignment with PCI's organizational commitments to equity, non-discrimination, and social inclusion. PCI's approach recognizes that women and girls are powerful agents of change and are essential contributors to the social and economic wellbeing of their communities. We also recognize the contributions that men and boys can make to advancing gender equality, and the ways in which rigid gender norms and societal conceptions of masculinity negatively affect their wellbeing and that of their families.



Empowering women economically and socially: Women and girls in developing countries continue to face unequal access to services and resources, including education, formal financial institutions, and savings mechanisms. Women Empowered (WE) is PCI's evidence-based social and economic empowerment platform that enables women to save money, develop financial literacy, and invest in income-generating activities, positioning them as leaders and decision-makers. WE groups target vulnerable, disenfranchised women by giving them a space to save and to develop their own social and economic capacities. The WE model has increased food and economic security, decreased use of exploitive money lenders, increased financial savings, improved relations between female participants and their husbands, increased women's leadership in the community, and improved the self-sufficiency of vulnerable women. Since 2008, almost 500,000 WE group members have participated across 12 countries.

PUTTING WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE CENTER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To fulfill our promise to advance gender equality as core to our mission, PCI commits to:

- Ensuring that the voices of women and girls guide the design of our interventions.
- Promoting inclusion and dignity for all marginalized groups and women of all ages, recognizing the many forms of discrimination that women and girls face related to age, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, disability, and marital status.
- Working with men and boys and decisionmakers at all levels to transform harmful gender norms and stop gender-based discrimination and violence.
- Integrating evidence-based, gender-smart approaches into the sectors in which we work.
- Applying an empowerment framework to all that we do.
- Forming alliances with like-minded partners who share our values and commitment to gender equality.
- Providing staff with the training and resources needed to carry out their work through a gender lens.
- Conducting gender analysis as a foundational step for all new programs.
- Integrating GBV prevention efforts into all of our community-based work.
- Continually assessing our internal policies and procedures to ensure they promote equity and protection for all.



PCI (Project Concern International) is an international nonprofit on a mission to enhance health, end hunger and overcome hardship worldwide. Founded in 1961, PCI impacted the lives of more than 10 million people last year alone through programs in 15 countries spanning Asia, Africa and the Americas.



Addressing the needs of women in communities vulnerable to disasters: In partnership with USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, PCI is working to improve the effectiveness of disaster risk management in Guatemala by incorporating a gender lens into disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices. PCI is working closely with national, municipal, and local level stakeholders to design these tools and processes, as well as to strengthen the political commitment, accountability and engagement for inclusive DRR.



Expanding life choices for adolescent girls: With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Girl Effect, PCI is working to help girls in Malawi and Botswana develop into **D**etermined, **R**esilient, **E**mpowered, **A**IDS-free, **M**entored, and **S**afe women. Through the DREAMS Initiative, PCI seeks to substantially reduce new HIV infections among vulnerable adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) (15-24) by promoting positive sexual health behaviors, increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services, and creating an enabling environment for AGYW through creation of safe spaces in schools and communities.



Reducing vulnerability to sex trafficking: PCI addresses sex trafficking through four major intervention areas: Youth Empowerment and Prevention, Demand Reduction, Coalition Building and Public Awareness. Along the US/Mexico border, PCI's *Girls Only!* program promotes self-esteem, develops life skills and inspires positive motivation in young girls who are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. In Ethiopia, PCI developed the first resource manual for Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Ethiopia, in both Amharic and English. The manual is designed to build awareness of TIP in Ethiopia and provide information, knowledge and practical tools to help Ethiopians prevent and respond effectively to the problem of TIP in their country.



Engaging men as fathers, supportive partners, and champions for change: A growing body of evidence recognizes gender inequality as an underlying determinant of child undernutrition due to women's limited influence over household food purchases, time-burden, poor mental health, and low confidence and self-esteem. With funding from the Eleanor Crook and Hilton Foundations, PCI has launched the EFFECT and EFFECT Plus research projects in Tanzania to study the potential impact of father engagement activities on nutritional and developmental outcomes for infants and young children. This body of work builds on learning from the implementation research project, *Father Involvement in Promoting Reproductive, Maternal, and Newborn and Child Health*, which PCI carried out in the Balaka and Machinga Districts of Malawi between 2016 and 2017.

Mobilizing communities to shift harmful gender norms: Gender-based violence (GBV) is a key driver of the HIV epidemic, especially in South Africa, where PCI implemented a USAID/PEPFAR-funded Social Mobilization to End GBV project. Together with its two local implementing partners, PCI led a cross-sectoral effort to change the social norms that sustain physical and sexual violence against women. The project was recognized by USAID for its "bold, well-conceived, and evidence-based strategies" that reached millions of men and women through innovative community-led organizing efforts. Under Njira, a \$30 million USAID-funded food security project in Malawi, PCI has trained cadres of community members and leaders as gender champions and equipped them with messages and strategies to promote women's participation and leadership in the community, increased equity in household decision-making, and greater involvement of fathers in children's caregiving.



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