



# **care**® TIPPING POINT

## Phase 2 | Technical Brief

# GIRL LED ACTIVISM AND STRUCTURED ALLYSHIP

## Background

CARE's Tipping Point Initiative is a multi-country initiative addressing child marriage by focusing on its root causes by enabling girls to assert their rights, helping families and communities to support them, and influencing policy to sustain change. It does this through community-level programming in Bangladesh and Nepal, evidence generation, and multi-level advocacy and influencing efforts at national, regional and global levels. Tipping Point's approach uses synchronized engagement with different participant groups (e.g. girls, boys, parents, community leaders) around key programmatic topics, and creates public spaces for all community members to be part of the dialogue. Tipping Point's approach is rooted in challenging

social expectations and repressive norms and promoting girl-driven movement building and activism. Research shows that major social change only occurs when those who have been excluded from power organize collectively in the form of social movements to challenge existing systems and their impact.<sup>1,2</sup> Therefore, Tipping Point has adolescent girl-led activism and allyship by parent and adolescent boys to help girls find and collectively step into spaces to reflect on and tackle inequality

This technical brief provides an overview of the way that Tipping Point cultivated girl-led activism and movement building and engaged allies to support those girls.

## Girl-Led Activism

### Training of Activists

Tipping Point's approach to activism begins with a grounding skillset for girl activists. To cultivate this skillset, Tipping Point partnered with EMpower, who call their Learning Communities approach a mini Masters in Business Administration (MBA).<sup>2,3</sup> This approach enables girls to develop skills in different aspects of management, such as organization, teamwork, negotiation, leadership, planning, budgeting, interfacing with the public, and participant-led monitoring and evaluation.

Girls' collectives that exist in each Tipping Point program area select 5 leaders who come for a training. During this initial training, girls learn about their role as an activist and reflect on the risks they could encounter in their activism. These leaders identify a common issue they wish to focus on, create a slogan for their activism around the issue selected, plan to conduct a survey in their communities to understand other girls' realities related to the issue selected, and plan monitoring of their various activities. The girls are given a set budget for the entire year to spend on four or more activities they plan themselves, as described below, and create a plan to maintain the budget and monitor their activities.

### Girl-led Survey and Sharing Results with their Community

In the initial training, girl activists create a survey about the issue they have decided to focus on; after the training, they collect information in their respective communities using this survey built with the help of mentors. After analyzing how the issue affects the girls from their community, each group of 5 girl activists prepares an event with the rest of their girls' collective members, the first of four in their budget, to share what they have learned with people in their community and announce their plans to address the issue for themselves.

### Raising Awareness and Creating Change through Activism

Girl activists in different communities plan activities to address the common issue selected. The activity planned will depend on the context of the community and the desire and capacity of the girl activists and their group members. In Tipping Point program areas, groups have organized talk shows, popular theatre, rallies, and sports events followed by discussions to foster reflective dialogue among community members in a public-facing forum. During the year that the activists are accompanied in a structured way, these types of events make up the second and third activity of the four for which they budgeted during their initial training.

### Graduation event

A graduation event is planned for approximately one year after the initial training of activists. Instead of individual community-level events, the graduation is an opportunity for all of the girl activists selected by their peers to come together. The trained activists plan an event and decide on strategic individuals to invite, such as government officials, parents, religious leaders, teachers, and other influential community members. During the event, girls present their activism over the last year, including their successes and challenges. They also share how they wish to continue their activism, while inviting the attendees to join them in their journey towards equality. In Tipping Point program areas, the girls' call to action in this forum has led to receiving financial commitments from the government and the creation of forums for girls' participation in decision-making spaces.





## Mentoring: Stepping Back so Girls Step Forward

A key piece of both the EMpower Learning Community model is the training of relatively young female staff members to act as mentors to girl activists. Tipping Point's female field facilitators of the girls' collectives are selected as mentors. Mentors are meant to ask questions to facilitate girls' own views and decisions and be there to support whenever the girls need them. However, the mentors are not meant to lead the process nor direct the girls to act in a certain manner. For example, a mentor may see that girls appear to have distributed the budget unrealistically. Instead of recreating the budget herself, the mentor could ask how they reached their estimation, if there are ways to reduce the cost, or if they could see any ways for mobilizing community resources. Mentors also help girls practice beginning an activist conversation in their families and communities.

## Girl-led Monitoring: Moment of change

In the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the implementation, girl activists monitor their own change by narrating shifts in their self-esteem, mobility, confidence in public, expressing thoughts on harassment, being an agent of change, planning skills and response to gender and equity. After filling in the Moment of Change format, a part of the EMpower toolkit, the girls are able to assess where they need to put more focus and practice and the mentors support them by discussing opportunities to practice their skills.<sup>4</sup>

## Risk Mitigation Approach and Strategies

For every event planned, girls use a risk mitigation format to assess anticipated risks and develop plans to mitigate them.<sup>5</sup> This requires girls to think ahead about potential risks or barriers that could jeopardize their safety or the success of their event before assigning roles and responsibilities among themselves to address these potential issues. Sometimes, girls identify support needed from allies, which they request during their sharing of their plans with the boy and parent allies described in the following section.



## Structured Allyship

Each of the experiences of girl activists help them to build their individual and collective capacity to manage resources, execute activities, and monitor and evaluate their successes and challenges. Tipping Point has found that formal and informal support structures are crucial to the success of the young activists. Therefore, it is important to build the capacity of people around the girl to come alongside her as an ally instead of a protector, and a supporter instead of a guide.

## Structured Allyship of Boys and Parents

Boys', mothers' and fathers' groups already exist in Tipping Point program areas, and members of these are offered the opportunity to challenge inequitable gender norms and stand by the girls in their activism. These boys and parents are trained separately in a workshop format on how to be an ally to girls in their communities – specifically around the girl-led activist activities. The ally training begins with a discussion of their role as ally and the importance of an environment where girls feel free to question, raise their voices collectively and take risks to advance social change at community level.

The sessions for this training include a reflection on whether actions taken are those of an ally or a protector in a given situation. For instance, when a girl's voice or opinion is ignored by those she is speaking to, and her brother restates her point or question, is he acting as an ally to lift and center her voice or is he inserting his own voice into the space? The boys and parents also practice beginning activist conversations with family members, spouses, friends and neighbors. These sessions are led by field facilitators who coordinate with the mentors assigned to girl activists.



After the training, the boys and parent allies meet with the girl activists, who share how they can support them in their next activity. After each girl-led activism activity, the allies also engage in a process of review and reflection with girl activists. The girls share their experience and feedback on how they felt the sessions were managed and seek their feedback on how they feel the event was able to challenge the norm. They also share plans for the next event, asking for support in the execution or risk mitigation plans.

For more information on Tipping Point's approach to girl-led activism, structured allyship, or any other program components, please contact us at [tippingpoint@care.org](mailto:tippingpoint@care.org).

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Smith, J, and Wiest, D. (2012) Social Movements in the World-System: The Politics of Crisis and Transformation. Russell Sage Foundation.
- 2 <sup>2</sup> CARE understands a movement as “an organized set of people vested in making a change in their situation by pursuing a common political agenda through collective action”, as defined by the women’s rights advocate and academic, Srilatha Batliwala.
- 3 TP’s girl led movement building is adapted from the [EMpower-Emerging Markets Foundation](#) Learning Communities Model.
- 4 EMpower- The Emerging Markets Foundation. (2016) Learning Together: A Toolkit for Monitoring & Evaluating Programs for Adolescent Girls.
- 5 Girls Not Brides (2018) Stand Up, Speak Out! Youth activism training- to help you end child marriage

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