

# 10to19

DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE



## JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE

From the Dasra Girl Alliance to  
the Dasra Adolescents Collaborative

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# INTRODUCTION

This document traces the journey and progress of Dasra and its partners into the sector of adolescent girl empowerment, highlighting key milestones but more importantly, learnings through the journey. It also highlights the role that USAID and other key partners have played in supporting Dasra's journey and building an ecosystem for adolescent girls in India.

The steadfast and determined support of these partners, through the challenges and successes, has been the cornerstone on which our collective journey has grown and accomplished significant progress over the past seven years. The unrestricted, long-term, collective funding leveraged for Dasra as well as the sector, access to technical expertise, and facilitated engagements with government agencies and other important stakeholders has been invaluable.

In alignment with the organization's core values, Dasra's work in the adolescent girl sector has been characterized by powerful partnerships, trust-based networks, and investments in successful, scalable solutions for deeper impact on the ground. The journey has allowed Dasra and its partners the opportunity to constantly innovate, learn, grow, and ultimately accelerate and multiply impact. More importantly, the belief that together we are stronger and the pursuit of putting that belief into action every year has brought us that much closer to achieving what is foremost for us all – a world where girls are safe, heard and celebrated.

In many ways, our collective work in this sector follows the evolution of the alliance itself, which has become more deliberate, collaborative, data-driven, and impact-oriented over the years.



## UNDERSTANDING THE NEED TO INVEST IN ADOLESCENTS

Dasra's work to improve the lives of Indian women and girls began in 2008, when it partnered with Godrej Industries to undertake research and identify strategic investments in girls' education. The partnership yielded a report, **Girl Power: Transforming India through Educating Girls**, which not only highlighted the need for philanthropic investment in girls' education, but also recommended investing in existing community-based non-profits with demonstrable track record and scalable models to maximize impact.

Between 2008 and 2012, Dasra went on to research additional areas such as adolescent empowerment, nutrition, sanitation and employability, and to support and scale high-impact organizations such as Magic Bus, Muktanagan and Lend-a-Hand India. Every report created and organization worked with universally reinforced that:

### 01. Adolescent girls in India are a largely invisible group

They are discriminated against twice over—by gender and by age. There continues to be disproportionate number of barriers working against them, such as patriarchal norms, restricted mobility, early marriage, violence in the home and outside and a lack of access to health services. At the same time, high school drop-out rates and a lack of employable skills prevents adolescent girls from fully participating in society and in the economy.

### 02. Investing in adolescent girls leads to an exponential return on investment

Both academic and field evidence indicated that even though there were a disproportionate number of barriers stacked up against girls, investing in them and their well-being would yield exponential returns on investment. Research indicated that when adolescent girls were empowered, educated and kept healthy, they became successful agents of change, drastically impacting and improving a range of issues such as maternal mortality, child survival and gender-based violence. It highlighted that investing in girls translates into better futures for women, children and families, which ultimately leads to intergenerational impact.

### 03. There are a range of interconnecting issues impacting the lives of women and adolescent girls in India

Few programs at the time, if any, focused on empowering adolescent girls. Those that did, addressed them as children or as potential mothers in the system. Very few focused on adolescent girls as individuals with their own agency. If we are to improve the situation of women and girls in India, it is critical to solve the many inter-connected challenges along her the life cycle – including

challenges along her the life cycle – including both, her maternal and reproductive health and rights, and her education and ability to access opportunities.

### 04. The ecosystem to support adolescent girls is fractured

There were several reasons for this. There was a lack of policies across various government ministries that addressed the specific needs of adolescent girls. Traditionally, government programs largely aimed either at children or at women, leaving adolescent girls in the gap. Apart from a few international institutional donors, there was limited consistent, long-term funding allocated to address the challenges of adolescent girls as a primary beneficiary group. Further, since traditional funding had typically been attached to sectors such as education or health rather than a particular demographic group, non-profits aligned their programs to sectors as well. Further, while several development issues such as education, skills development and healthcare had been covered by the media over the years, there was nearly no coverage in mainstream media about the issues impacting the lives of adolescent girls, and its subsequent impact on the development of the country.

Dasra's many research reports and in-depth field experience unequivocally showed that in order to truly move the needle on key development issues in India, the holistic needs of adolescent girls would need to be addressed. For the sector, at the time, this meant working on addressing maternal and child health in the country – a cause that served as an entry point to working with the many young girls at risk of becoming young mothers well before they should. It was around this time that the Government of India, too, was realizing the need to address the issues of adolescents; it had taken up the RMNCH and instituted the +A (Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health) in a significant manner.

# BUILDING THE DASRA GIRL ALLIANCE

## Launch of the Dasra Girl Alliance

In 2011, UK-based family foundation Kiawah Trust reached out to Dasra to conduct research on the lives of adolescent girls in India, with a specific emphasis on identifying challenges, gaps, and potential scalable solutions. The report that followed this research, **Owning Her Future**, made a clear case for investing in this cohort. With this also came the realization that moving outcomes for an issue, which was neither well known nor well understood by various stakeholders, would require significant financial investment and collective action at greater scale than ever before.

At the same time, USAID globally looked to invest in improving maternal and child health by working with local partners who enabled private participation alongside civil society intervention. With the credibility to anchor an alliance and the ability to support the critical backbone costs of the Collaborative, USAID provided the galvanizing push to help Dasra formalize a partnership focused on the improving RMNCH+A outcomes in India. The matching grant awarded by USAID, also provided the incentive to attract partners like the Kiawah Trust and Piramal Foundation to up the ante and formalize their engagements.

With this push, Dasra launched the Dasra Girl Alliance in 2013 in partnership with USAID, Kiawah Trust and the Piramal Foundation. With an initial investment of USD 14 Million, the

Alliance aimed to build a thriving ecosystem that empowered adolescent girls and improved health outcomes for mothers and children. The Dasra Girl Alliance aimed at directing awareness, funding and resources to the field of adolescents in India. And the initial partners trusted Dasra as an ecosystem builder and mobiliser of philanthropy.

Each of the three partners brought with them their own set of expertise to the Alliance. While Kiawah Trust had deep interest in the overall well-being of adolescents, USAID had years of experience in the field of maternal and childcare, and Piramal Foundation had a body of work to support maternal health in tribal communities. Therefore, Dasra saw an opportunity to bring together this pool of partners to stitch together a common narrative that was at the intersection of these three areas of interest for the funders; and adolescents were seen as a catalytic demography for impact in India.

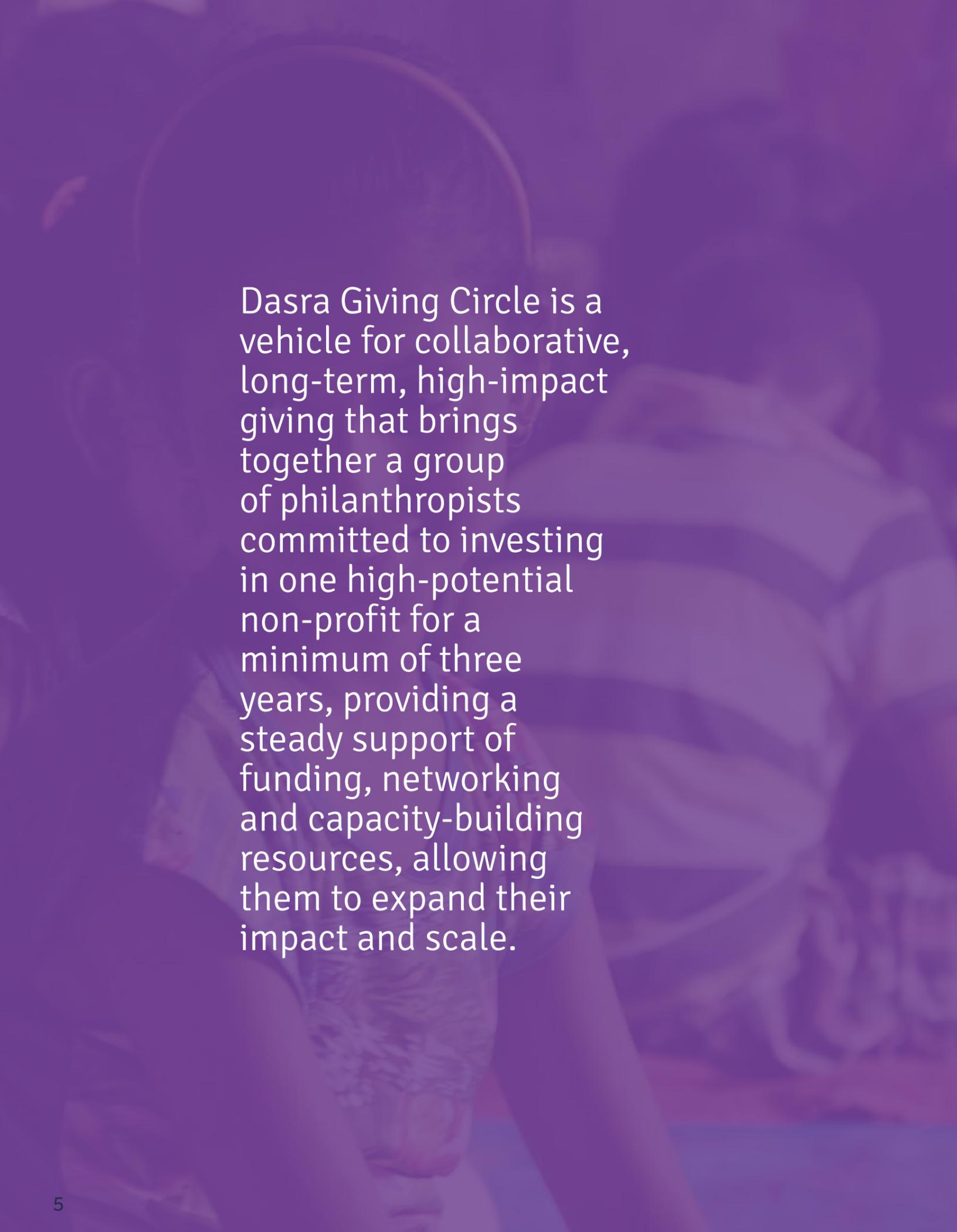
When the Alliance was formed in 2013, few in India believed in the power of investing in adolescent girls. However, the Alliance realized that a group as complex and underserved as this could not be addressed by any individual organization, a single stakeholder group or static business models. It required diverse players – enlightened funders, organizations, government bodies and media partnerships to work together to create long-term change.

**The Alliance therefore set out to build this collaborative ecosystem by:**

- Raising awareness on girls' issues through research and the media
- Unlocking domestic philanthropy to fund social organizations
- Building social organizations so that they can impact more girls, mothers and children
- Fostering collaboration among key players to achieve common goals

With the belief that India's then 113 million adolescent girls had the potential to be the power that could protect and propel India's future, the Alliance leveraged Dasra's core strengths – creating knowledge, building capacity and driving collaboration and funding towards a common goal of improving outcomes for adolescent girls.





Dasra Giving Circle is a vehicle for collaborative, long-term, high-impact giving that brings together a group of philanthropists committed to investing in one high-potential non-profit for a minimum of three years, providing a steady support of funding, networking and capacity-building resources, allowing them to expand their impact and scale.

## The Approach

With the objective of raising awareness of adolescent issues, unlocking funds for the sector, and building up high-impact NGOs, Dasra employed its 3C approach:

- 01** Creating Knowledge And Awareness
- 02** Facilitating Collaborative And Strategic Funding
- 03** Providing Capacity Building Support



01

CREATING  
KNOWLEDGE  
& AWARENESS

# 01

## CREATING KNOWLEDGE & AWARENESS

The Dasra Girl Alliance, supported by USAID, worked to showcase how investment towards adolescent girls was highly catalytic, with the ability to drive intergenerational change. From being a sector agnostic philanthropic advisor, Dasra started indexing on the issue of adolescent girls.

In 2013, Dasra launched the Dasra Girl Power Awards. These awards recognized and supported high-impact organisations that worked towards empowering adolescent girls in India. For the next 3 years, the platform awarded a total of INR 30 lakh per year to three Indian nonprofit organizations that delivered programs in areas of health, education and life skills for adolescent girls. In a unique initiative, the Dasra Girl Power Awards also provided capacity building support to 15 shortlisted organizations that would undergo an intensive two-day workshop and network with potential funders. These awards were a platform to shine a spotlight on adolescent girls as a sector, and not just as a demographic, and helped Dasra encourage a number of NGOs to focus on this sector too.

Similarly, Dasra worked to map the sector to help guide potential investors. The organization put together

- 21 research reports and whitepapers to guide potential funders
- Sector mapping efforts that identified 1,290 organizations
- Diligence reports highlighting 108 organizations to funders

“Most programs either focus on issues (such as education or health) or children or older women. Adolescent girls are a frequently overlooked beneficiary group when it comes to program design or focus. With the Dasra Girl Power Awards, we aim to build urgency around issues faced by adolescent girls and establish the need to focus on their empowerment.”

– Neera Nundy, Co-founder, Dasra





02

**FACILITATING  
COLLABORATIVE AND  
STRATEGIC FUNDING**

# 02

## FACILITATING COLLABORATIVE AND STRATEGIC FUNDING

To impact a greater number of lives – how you give, is more critical than how much you give.

Dasra knows that patient, flexible capital from funders along for the journey is critical to support the growth and evolution of a high-potential, high-impact civil society sector. With this in mind, Dasra nurtures funders to become equal partners in the growth journey of nonprofits, and invest their skills, expertise, networks and capital, to maximize their impact to achieve audacious outcomes.

In order to accomplish this, Dasra drives individual philanthropists, families, foundations and corporates to collaborate with non-profits, government and other stakeholders, as ‘development risk capital’ providers, to scale up impact. In this particular space, Dasra’s objectives are not just to scale organizations that focus on RMNCH+A, but to also accelerate effective philanthropy towards several causes and outcomes that can improve adolescent well-being.

In 2013-2014, Dasra raised a total of USD 12 million (~INR 72 crore) from 41 funders. The largest portion (INR 35 crore) came from six foundations, followed by INR 28 crore from 15 corporate funders and INR 9 crore from individual funders. Geographically, more than 50% of funding (INR 40 crore) originated from 24 funders in India. In addition to India, 11 US funders contributed INR 16 crore and six UK funders contributed



## The Opportunity

Philanthropic funding from private individual represents a huge untapped opportunity for the sector. The number of Ultra High-Net-Worth Individuals (UHNIs) expected to increase from about 62,000 in 2011 to about 330,000 by 2022. With the right support, if channeled properly, this group has the potential to lift millions of vulnerable people out of poverty and deprivation. This means that funders need to give more, and give more strategically – investing with not just their funding, but also their time and unique expertise.

## The Approach

The Dasra Girl Alliance, with its core costs supported by USAID, provided a prime opportunity for Dasra to focus and truly scale its efforts to build champions for the RMNCH+A sector. Its efforts towards this started with raising investments from India’s own rapidly-growing base of HNIs through the pioneering Dasra Giving Circles.

As the market for Indian philanthropy grew, Dasra evolved by offering advisory services for individual philanthropists and their families willing to invest larger sums of money in a strategically-driven, portfolio-style approach, offering them research services, monitoring their portfolios, and helping build capacities of the organizations they invested in.

This was not all – in order to enable this kind of funding, Dasra has been championing the conditions for flexible funding to thrive. These include:



Greater Transparency and Trust



Stronger communication between donors & Donees



Awareness to grow a giving culture



Capacity building of NGO



Better Informed Decisions

## The Dasra Giving Circles

The Dasra Giving Circle were an innovative model that brought together a group of donors commit to a particular organization, supporting a specific cause. Each circle brought together between 8-10 members, contributing INR 3 crore over three years, resulting in a flexible, unrestricted, long-term pool of INR 3 crore for the NGO at the center of the circle.

To facilitate this process, Dasra spent eight to twelve months on research and due diligence to shortlist a set of high-potential non-profit organizations serving the area of interest. This enabled participating funders to understand the gaps in the sector, the interventions to address an issue and find effective organizations in India working in that area, all before giving any funding. The funders then selected the organization by examining their impact and potential for scale, through the three to five year business plans created with Dasra’s support. The organization received funding for the next three years, and capacity-building support from Dasra throughout the funding period.



**“Instead of finding one person to give USD 250,000, we find 10 to give USD 25,000—and we access 10 different perspectives and funders. We’ve created the largest collaborative giving platform in India. This is the first time our members have made a three-year commitment of this size to one organization. Grants of this size allow the social entrepreneur to realize longer-term goals.”**

**– Deval Sanghavi, Co-founder, Dasra**

## Benefits For Funders

The Dasra Giving Circle allowed funders multiple benefits such as:

- The opportunity for a low-risk investment, with a visible multiplier effect—thus **attracting new funders**.
- A local partner to help build their understanding of the sector and **navigate the complex Indian social sector**
- The **opportunity to learn** by joining a platform alongside more experienced, credible funders, including USAID and other institutional funders.

## Benefits For the NGO

The Dasra Giving Circle acted as a vehicle that allowed NGOs to:

- Access unrestricted, relatively **long-term funding (for 3 years)** from philanthropists,
- Access **capacity building support** from Dasra
- **Access the perspectives and expertise of a range of funders**, who often went on to become long-term champions of the organizations work.

With over 12 circles created under the umbrella of the Dasra Girl Alliance, Dasra raised over USD 5 million and brought in 115 funders who had never funded the RMNCH+A sector before. This demonstrated both the appetite and commitment among philanthropists to dedicate large amounts of funding over a longer period of time to move the needle on issues affecting adolescent girls in the development sector.

## Advisory Services to Drive Strategic Funding

As funders grow and mature in their giving journeys, many outgrow the Giving Circle approach and look to give larger sums of more sustained funding to a portfolio of organizations. India has also seen an influx of ultra-high net worth individuals who have changed the landscape of private giving in India. These individuals have a giving potential of INR 10 crore or more and the appetite to drive innovation in the sector.

For these individuals, Dasra provides customized one-on-one engagements and structured programs, to help them better understand their personal motivations and combine their passion for giving with a more objective and rigorous approach to ensure better outcomes for society.

These are further supported by efforts to increase awareness of India-specific issues and causes through issue-based research reports, profiles in the media, awareness building and narrative change campaigns, speaking engagements and roadshows, and philanthropy-based gatherings such as the annual Dasra Philanthropy Week with funders around specific issues.

Through strategic advisory efforts between 2012 and 2017, Dasra raised or influenced over USD 60 million for the RMNCH+A sector.



# 03

## CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT



# 03

## CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT

Over the years, Dasra Giving Circles funded a range of topics related to the areas of research, such as girls' education, malnutrition, healthcare, sports and anti-trafficking. The Dasra Giving Circle acted as a vehicle that allowed NGOs to access unrestricted, relatively long-term funding (for 3 years) from philanthropists, capacity building support from Dasra, and the perspectives and expertise of a range of funders.



## CASE STUDY 1: Educate Girls

Educate Girls focused on improving the retention of girls in government schools in Rajasthan, a state with the worst educational gender-gaps in the entire country. The first Dasra Giving Circle and subsequent support from Dasra enabled Educate Girls to scale up its impact from 70,000 children across 500 schools in 2008, to nearly 2 million children across 8,500 schools in just eight years. Additionally, it successfully raised the outcomes in language and math by 35-65%, bridged the literacy gap in a district in less than a decade, and transformed school infrastructure to be more girl-friendly. Equally importantly, with the Dasra Giving Circle funding and capacity building support, Educate Girls managed to escalate their growth, transforming from a team size of 30 and an annual budget of USD 108,000 in 2008 working in just one district, to an organization with a team size of 1,000 people in 2016, working in 10 districts, on an annual operating budget of USD 5.6 million.

Building the organization's institutional capacity in terms of management, systems and processes, technology, has enabled Educate Girls to measure the outcome of their effort with far more diligence and rigor. Subsequently, they have been able to structure a Development Impact Bond – the first of its kind in India, and the first in the world involving an educational social organization. Currently in progress, this outcome-led financial mechanism

allows Educate Girls to innovate, adapt and tailor their programs to achieve the best possible results for marginalized girls and ensure that funders only pay for results achieved.

For Dasra, this investment in Educate Girls provided in-depth exposure to the ground realities of the average Indian girl – the everyday challenges and barriers that keep her from attaining her full potential, as well as the solutions that could help her leap forward. This experience also provided critical insights into the key structural factors necessary for an organization to scale effectively, including leadership with a vision and willingness to scale, a strong management team, working collaboratively with strategically aligned partners, the invaluable role of constant data tracking, analysis and evaluation, and deep community engagement.

Perhaps most importantly, Educate Girls was Dasra's first case study that proved the efficacy of the Giving Circle model, showcasing that the right organization, given unrestricted funding and capacity building support, will not only be able to scale radically, but will be able to successfully begin to move the needle on key issues. With this experience under its belt, Dasra focused on building a strong portfolio of high-potential, high impact non-profit organizations.



**“To be able to scale up, the nonprofit founders have to invest time and money in building up capability. Dasra has been providing high-quality management training to NGOs.” – Amit Chandra, Managing Director of Bain Capital**

**When we began work in [government-run] rescue homes, [Dasra] helped me believe that we could be sustainable. Later on, the big challenge was when we were expanding all over India. Scaling up systematically is very important and we needed help on several fronts, including writing a business plan in a way that educates the funder.” –Suparna Gupta, Founder of Aangan Trust**

## CASE STUDY 2: The NazFoundation (India) Trust

The Naz Foundation won the Dasra Giving Circle on using sports for adolescent empowerment. Having been a part of the portfolio of the Dasra Girl Alliance between 2013-2017, Naz has impacted over 50,000 girls in 4 years backed by investments in Leadership, Strategy and M&E

## Between 2013 and 2017:

Overall team  
size grew  
from 25 to 80

Outreach grew  
4,092 to 50,000

Budget grew  
from INR 184 lakh  
to 505 lakh



### Leadership

#### Leadership Development:

- Naz's Program Director attended the Dasra Leadership Program in 2014 and the Strategic Perspectives in Non-Profit Management program at the Harvard Business School in 2016. Participation in these programs inspired the Program Director to undertake initiatives to strengthen Human Resources and Board Engagement.

#### Board Governance:

- Dasra helped Naz in re-structuring and engaging its Board and leveraging an expert to create a governance manual.



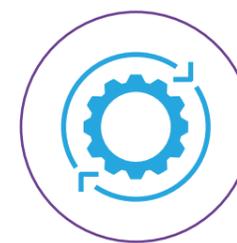
### Management

#### Business Planning & Strategy:

- Dasra supported Naz in creating its 3-year strategic plan which laid out the scaling plan to be achieved during the DGC period.
- Annual Strategic Reviews were initiated by Dasra. Through such reviews, Naz was prompted to reflect on how it has evolved and explore its role in the sector. Naz later on-boarded an external consultant for a vision alignment and long term strategy exercise.

#### Fundraising:

- Dasra helped Naz pitch to Bank of America Continuum (BACI) raising INR 60 lakh. Naz was able to capitalize on the opportunity and get additional funding of INR 1.6 crore.
- Dasra co-created stronger financial tools with comprehensive budgets, which improved financial planning.



### Operational

#### Partner Management:

- Dasra helped Naz in thinking through its decision to engage an external vendor for a qualitative review of the 'Goal' program and the vision alignment & long term strategy exercise.
- Dasra also helped create a vendor management process which included support on how Naz articulated the scope of work required, defined vendor selection criteria and inputs on contract creation and monitoring.

#### Human Resource:

- Dasra supported Naz on multiple initiatives such as its first organization wide annual retreat, a salary benchmarking exercise, organization structuring, streamlining hiring process and adopting a structured appraisal and performance review process.



### Adaptive & Learning

#### Monitoring & Evaluation

- Dasra developed a detailed logical framework for the 'Goal' program and helped identify and recruit third-party experts for a qualitative evaluation of Goal's impact.

#### Access to Networks and Peers:

- Through platforms like the Dasra Philanthropy Week and Dasra Philanthropy Forums in India and U.S.A, opportunities were provided to the Program Director and beneficiaries to showcase Naz and increase Goal's visibility.

## CASE STUDY 3: ARMMAN

ARMMAN that was part of the portfolio of the Dasra Girl Alliance between 2013-2017, has showcased its scaling potential with a 304X increase in cumulative budget and a 26X growth in outreach through capacity building in leadership, fundraising and project management.

## Between 2013 and 2017:

Overall team size grew from 2 to 105

Outreach grew 26x to 14,71,000

Budget grew 10,000 to 31,43,000



### Leadership

#### Leadership Development:

- Four members of ARMMAN's leadership team have been a part of leadership programs through Dasra support. Participation in these programs has helped build the capacity of the second line and focus their attention on key need areas within the organization such as vision and long term strategies.
- Dasra has helped ARMMAN navigate the transition of their CEO as well as in the hiring of the new leader.

#### Board Governance:

- An engagement was facilitated with Aarti Madhusudan of Governance Counts to assist ARMMAN in the development of an active and engaged Board, one of the recommendations from the governance exercise.
- Dasra also helped ARMMAN set up and engage a Steering Committee from its key stakeholders to guide the organization while the Board is being strengthened.



### Management

#### Business Planning & Strategy:

- Dasra supported ARMMAN with building detailed scale up plans for mMitra scale-up, which have resulted in ARMMAN expanding its outreach in two major geographies. The database of over 1000 NGOs maintained by Dasra played a key role in facilitated NGO partnerships for community outreach and enrollment which have been an integral part of this role.

#### Fundraising:

- Dasra has supported ARMMAN in the creation of budgets and budget templates for mMitra in Delhi and Mumbai, which have contributed to better cash flow management and budgeting for fundraising. This has been accompanied by the creation of reporting systems and processes to enable better funder management.



### Operational

#### Partner Management:

- Dasra provided operational support to ARMMAN in the implementation of mMitra across the years which led to ARMMAN being able to establish its proof of concept of the program before scaling.

#### Human Resource:

- Dasra has helped ARMMAN with hiring and onboarding of key leadership staff across communications, research, advocacy and program management roles.
- Goal setting processes have been initiated in ARMMAN through Dasra's support which should help with strategy alignment of staff across the organization.



### Adaptive & Learning

#### Monitoring & Evaluation

- Dasra enabled an impact evaluation of mMitra by the Foundation for Research in Health Systems (FRHS) the results of which are helping validate the impact that mMitra is having on the ground.
- ARMMAN's transition to Tableau software for internal monitoring and evaluation was supported by Dasra in the interests of being able to better visualize the large amounts of data being generated by mMitra.

#### Access to Networks and Peers:

- ARMMAN was profiled in Dasra's flagship report 'Lifeline' and selected for Dasra's collaborative philanthropy initiative, Dasra Giving Circle on 'Technology for Health', which supported ARMMAN's expansion to Delhi through unrestricted funds.
- ARMMAN has gained recognition at various forums through Dasrabeneficiaries to showcase Naz and increase Goal's visibility.

# OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DASRA GIRL ALLIANCE

From 2013 to 2017, the Alliance made significant progress towards these outcomes by:

- Highlighting and mainstreaming adolescent girl issues through research and media partnerships
- Identifying successful non-profit models and providing them with consistent funding and capacity building support to focus and grow adolescent girl programming
- Mobilizing various relevant stakeholders such as government, non-profits, funders and sector experts to create a community of practice that would learn, share and evolve together, and
- Creating a pipeline of traditional and non-traditional funders for investment in the sector.

## Lives Impacted

- Dasra directed USD 28 million to the RMNCH+A sector using USD 3 million
- Successfully touched the lives of over 3.5 million children, adolescents, girls and mothers

## Funding

- 145 unique givers of which 115 funded this space for the first time
- Engaged other traditional and non-traditional givers such as the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, GlaxoSmithKline, JP Morgan, Johnson & Johnson, Bank of America and British Telecom

## Knowledge

- 21 research reports and whitepapers published
- 1,290 organizations mapped
- 108 organizations highlighted to funders
- 55 organizations funded

## Capacity Building

- Provided capacity building to almost 200 organizations through peer learning workshops that cumulatively reached more than 10 million girls women and children.
- Organizations receiving hands on support saw an average increase of 38% in their outreach and 108% their budgets.

## Mainstreaming the Issue of Adolescent Girls

Mainstreamed the issue of adolescent girls with over 240 articles in leading Indian and international publications such as SSIR, Mint, Hindustan Times, Guardian, Alliance, the Economist and the Hindu



# KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DASRA GIRL ALLIANCE

The first four years of the Alliance, and its early achievements, laid a solid foundation to build the ecosystem for adolescent girls in India. While doing so, many valuable lessons were learned – both from the field and from the structural construct of the Alliance. Acknowledging and addressing these lessons and insights helped us plan the next phase of the Alliance, which would eventually lead to the Dasra Adolescents Collaborative. Some of the key lessons were:



## 01. The focus needs to be on adolescents – both girls and boys

Social expectations of how men and boys are supposed to behave, along with rigid gender norms and stereotypes influencing how women are perceived in the context of a patriarchal society, directly impact behaviors and decisions related to schooling, sexual and reproductive health, marriage, mobility, and violence. Thus, it seemed vital, going forward, to ensure that implementing non-profits and stakeholders interested in moving the needle on adolescent girls should also address the prevailing behaviors and attitudes of men and adolescent boys towards girls and women.

## 02. Adolescents are a heterogeneous group

Adolescents are a varied group, with many diverse identity markers. The most significant of these is age. Needs of adolescents – in education, health and skills development vary greatly according to their age. The challenges faced by those aged 10-14 years are very different from those faced by older adolescents. It is important therefore for programs to take a nuanced approach to adolescents based on their life stage. Therefore, it is important for practitioners, funders and the government to acknowledge the heterogeneity of adolescents; collect relevant disaggregated data on distinct groups and ensure that programs are designed to meet their specific needs.

## 03. Sector specific funding is limiting in its ability to measure true impact

As mentioned before, traditional funding has been allocated towards specific development areas such as health, education, or sanitation, compelling non-profits to identify with certain sector/s and to specialize their programming to procure funding. However, a nonprofit with its core competency of keeping girls in school may also have an impact on the outcome of delaying marriage. Thus the approach to funding should not limit the scope to improve outcomes for a demographic group, but enable organizations to innovate new programs with the potential to create greater impact.

## 04. Activity based funding may not achieve desired outcomes

Even within certain sectors, traditional funders are typically prescriptive—funding non-profits to undertake certain activities or interventions that have known to create impact. For instance, a funder who believes that “teacher training” results in better education outcomes would fund various non-profits to implement that particular intervention. While this approach is logical in theory, it is a generalized solution that tends to disregard the differences in local contexts. Funders should therefore finance outcomes, and not specific programs, thus allowing implementing non-profits to build their internal capacity when necessary while holding themselves accountable to the desired results.

## 05. It is essential to support non-profits for comprehensive programming

Traditionally, funders choose organizations that were working on different programs and ask them to relocate to a geography in which they believed the program is needed. In this way, funders would often play the role of coordinators, bringing in different organizations to a particular geography in an effort to create impact. However, non-profits reveal that it is challenging for them to just replicate their program in another geography because they lack the same engagement with the communities and government that they enjoyed in geographies where they were successful. Instead, it would be more strategic for them to receive funding to add other components to existing programs, thereby equipping themselves to address the holistic needs of adolescents.

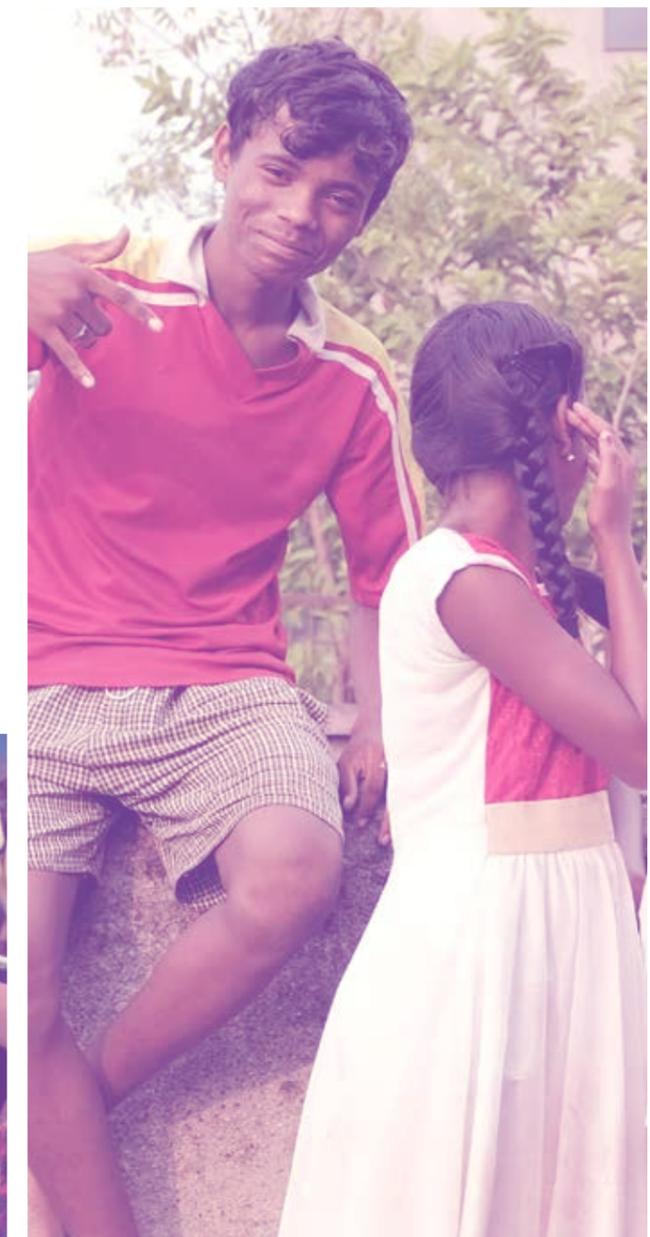
## 06. The government needs to be included from the very beginning

In the four years of the Dasra Girl Alliance, Dasra has been successful in engaging with sector experts, non-profits and funders. Supporting almost 200 organizations through the Alliance, many of whom engage with government in various ways, re-emphasized the importance of partnering with the government to ensure scale and sustainability. While Dasra has usually interacted with government through its non-profit partners, any group seeking to create large-scale systemic change would need to engage with the relevant government body in a more deliberate, direct and strategic manner. Therefore partnering with agencies that have a demonstrable track record in being able to do so or hiring key talent with government expertise should be considered to build out this component. meet their specific needs.



## 07. Collaboration demands a shared vision

For an alliance of this scale to be successful, the facilitator needs to do far more than just align efforts. Such an initiative demands a shared vision. While alliances draw on the respective strengths of each partner to move forward, they are also often at a risk of losing momentum unless all stakeholders involved are in agreement of and are working towards the exact same outcomes. While the priorities for each of the partners of the Alliance were complimentary and similar, they were not always the same (RMNCH+A for USAID, adolescent girls for Kiawah Trust). While this did not present any major hurdles in achieving the overall objectives, it does sometimes increase the burden on the facilitator to continuously align differing agendas. Dasra and its partners learned that the next phase of this initiative had to begin with a strong shared vision of strategy and desired outcomes, allowing Dasra and its partners to drive targeted, powerful impact.





## Assessment and Analysis for the Way Forward

In 2015, the Dasra Girl Alliance began a project to develop a Strategy for Adolescent Girl Empowerment (SAGE) in India. Through this project, the Dasra Girl Alliance set out to answer the question “What will it take to achieve more and better impact for adolescent girls in India’s disadvantaged communities?” Based on the key learnings from this project, Dasra, in 2016, engaged with strategic consultants such as Bain & Company, the Dalberg Global Development Advisors and The Bridgespan Group, to analyze the insights gained. Dasra also consulted with over 100 Indian and global experts in the field of adolescents, to understand how best to amplify its impact and meet the critical needs of adolescents in the country.

Through these conversations and after having studied how other sectors have evolved over the years, Dasra evolved a framework to understand the process and elements of ecosystem building. It involved the following five components:

### 01. Program Delivery:

Direct programming by implementing partners, in close engagement with the government, across three focus states to improve program delivery and to equip governments to take programs to scale

### 02. Public Systems Strengthening

Engage and advocate to government and public systems to enable policy, resources and/or program support focused on adolescents

### 03. Field Building

Develop a shared identity for adolescents through knowledge and thought leadership, funding, narrative building, capacity building for partners, and platforms to amplify practitioner and adolescent voices

### 04. Collaborative Action

Enable success of other impact pathways by bringing together mission aligned partners and resources that operate collaboratively in service of the overarching goals

**This framework, coupled with Dasra’s experience showed that the Alliance had covered significant ground by directing attention to the sector through research and media, built capacity of non-profits to take grassroots impact to scale and fostered a certain degree of collaboration among funders. It was thus time to incorporate learnings from the four years to be more adolescent focused, geography-specific and in support of comprehensive programming while moving towards a more outcome and evidence-led collaborative addressing the holistic needs of adolescents in India.**

# TRANSITION TO THE 10TO19: DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

Continuing to build on the foundation created by the Alliance, Dasra in March 2017 launched the 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative, a USD 30 million outcome-led platform to improve outcomes for adolescents in India.

The goal of this ongoing effort is to support and scale 4 adolescent health and development focused non-profits across geographies that will collectively work towards scaling positive pathways for 5 million adolescents (aged 10-19 years) over a period of five years.

Launched in 2017, it has aligned four implementing partners, more than 12 funding partners, government officials, researchers and technical experts, and a 180+ organization-strong 'Community of Practice' to together work towards its common vision. The Collaborative follows a two-pronged approach to not only deliver holistic and improved programs and services for adolescents on the ground, but also amplify adolescent voices and build championship among gatekeepers and influencers to ensure this population is prioritized at a national level.

The **10to19 Community of Practice (CoP)**, as part of the Dasra Adolescents Collaborative, is a network of organizations that works to position adolescents at the centre of the national health and development agenda by ensuring sector-wide issues are addressed through narrative change and collaboration, creating a collective voice for the sector to advocate for the government and serving as a learning platform. The CoP, which operates at the state level in Jharkhand and the national level, aims to position adolescents at the center of the national health and development agenda by:

- Ensuring sector-wide issues are addressed through narrative change and collaboration
- Creating a collective voice for the sector to advocate for the government
- Serving as a learning platform and support network for knowledge and insights on adolescent issues and programming

**10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative** is a high-impact platform that unites funders, technical experts, the government and social organizations to reach five million adolescents, and move the needle on four outcomes key to adolescent empowerment.



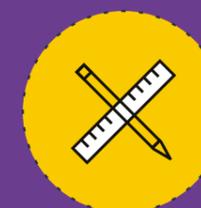
## Vision

A transformed India where millions of adolescents thrive with dignity & equity.

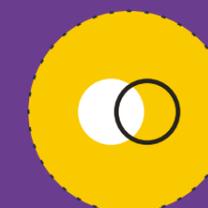
## Mission

Drive collaborative action towards scalable impact to ensure the adolescents are educated and healthy and empowered to make positive life choices

## Key Outcomes



Completion Of Secondary Education



Delay Age At Marriage



Increased Agency



Delay Of First Pregnancy/Birth

## Priority Areas

Scale state-level, evidence-based adolescents programming by fostering a network of stakeholders

Accelerating growth of the field by positioning adolescents at the centre of the national health and development agenda

## 10TO190 DAC IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Organisations	Aangan Trust	Centre for Catalysing Change	Child in Need Institute	Quest Alliance
Area of Work	Aangan Trust works with vulnerable communities to build safe spots for children and to strengthen child protection systems by engaging the community and local governing bodies.	Centre for Catalyzing Change mobilizes girls to achieve gender equality through programs focused on education, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equity.	Child in Need Institute works to activate rights-based convergent systems for improving health, nutrition, education and protection of children and adolescents.	Quest Alliance is an innovation and collaboration-focused alliance of governments, NGOS and donors to demonstrate and scale up models that develop 21st century skills in learners and educators, and advocate for research-based issues in the school-to-work transition.



At this stage, there was growing realisation within the partners that coordinated action for India's adolescents has transformative potential. Standing at a decisive point between youth and adulthood, the needs of India's 253 million adolescents were as diverse as they were urgent. Addressing them required coordinated, large-scale and long-term action. The Collaborative therefore sought to maximize the potential of strategic philanthropy to transform the lives of 10 to 19 year olds by leveraging the strengths of each stakeholder, and harmonizing their actions to achieve four key outcomes addressing the issues of marriage, pregnancy, agency and education. By doing this, the Collaborative aimed to make a powerful measurable impact on the lives of India's adolescents.

10to19 has had a strong start in bringing funding and visibility to adolescent programming. It not only brought in 13 new funders to focus on its four key outcomes for adolescents but also influenced funders' broader portfolios to focus more specifically on adolescents as a demographic. Over time, it's pool of funders grew to 20.

## Elements of the Operating Model

### 01. Big bets on local, homegrown organizations

The Collaborative believes that the most effective way to address the challenges of adolescents holistically is to invest in existing local non-profits that have the relevant experience and expertise.

### 02. Aggregating impact in specific geographies

The Collaborative understands that each state in India has a its unique context, and thus identifying and concentrating resources on select geographies will ensure focused collective efforts, opportunities to engage with relevant state governments and ease of measuring impact.

### 03. Funding comprehensive programming

The collaborative thus has moved away from the traditional sector-specific funding approach and instead funds the selected non-profits to innovate and grow through comprehensive adolescent programming.

### 04. Outcome-led funding

The collaborative thus has moved away from the traditional sector-specific funding approach and instead funds the selected non-profits to innovate and grow through comprehensive adolescent programming.

### 05. Evidence building

Serving as a learning platform and support network for knowledge and insights on adolescent issues and programming

### 06. Knowledge sharing and collective advocacy

In addition to working intensively with the four chosen organizations, the Collaborative holds conferences and workshops with its Community of Practice. These conferences and workshops allow non-profits to share and learn key insights, evidence, proven strategies, and best practices on what works to move the needle on adolescent issues, in order to maximize overall sector impact. This, coupled with government buy-in, can ensure long-term support for the sector, ultimately impacting and improving the lives of adolescent in India.

# OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 10to19 DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

With 24 months of on-ground programming under its belt, DAC has reached the end of Phase 1 of its programming. During that time, we have reached the following milestones

- 448K+ Adolescents reached till date across 10 districts
- 64K+ sensitized to adolescent needs and issues
- 1.6K government officials engaged through 80+ meetings on building awareness and support
- 3K Adolescent Health Days conducted towards strengthening RKSK implementation

Based on a dipstick data collection, adolescents in 10to19 implementation districts showed the following positive trends

## Jharkhand

- 87% married adolescents and 82% unmarried adolescents were aware of the risks of early pregnancy
- 83% of the respondents felt they can talk to their parents about their aspirations and think their parents will be receptive of their opinions.
- 92% girls and 91% boys know the legal age of marriage for both genders. There is scope to increase this to 100%.
- 88% surveyed had intentions to complete schooling, with majority wanting to study till at least the graduate level.

Based on a rapid endline data collection, adolescents in 10to19 implementation districts showed the following positive trends:

## Chhattisgarh

- 73% of all respondent adolescent girls were attending a school or college
- 70% of all respondent adolescent girls had interacted with a counsellor under the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (National Adolescent Health Programme)

## Assam

- 92% of all respondent adolescent girls were attending a school or college
- 93% of adolescent boys and girls were aware of the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (National Adolescent Health Programme)

## Amplification & Building Championship

- 64 Youth Champions from 6 states onboarded and trained on leading digital campaigns
- 430+ Youth mobilized, in collaboration with the MoHFW, to combat stigma & discrimination during COVID-19, with the intention of increasing and regularizing youth participation in policy & action forums
- 10M+ Social media impressions generated through digital engagement and youth champion's participation in campaigns. 1.6M of these impressions were from young people.

## Narrative Change and Awareness

- The **Ab Meri Baari** film, which highlighted the importance of first-time voters, received more than 5 lakh views.
- The larger **Ab Meri Baari** campaign engaged more than 50 NGOs and reached over 23 lakh individuals on social media. It received 270 media mentions and had an outreach that touched 14.5 crore.
- 300 girl champions across Rajasthan and Jharkhand conducted a survey to assess the service delivery of adolescent focused government schemes and policies across education, safety, sexual and reproductive health.
- These girl champions created task forces comprising of adolescent boys and girls to facilitate a diverse range of activities and discussions to drive awareness on adolescent-related issues, and wrote letters to their elected representatives explaining how their schools and communities can be improved to provide better adolescent focused services.

## Thought Leadership & Evidence Building

- 100+ Media mentions and exclusive stories published on 10to19 and the adolescents' cause
- 30+ **Adolescent focused knowledge products** published about successful interventions, emerging issues, and best practices related to adolescents
- 1 **Toolkit on Youth Advocacy** developed and showcased on Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's platform. This toolkit was designed to help young people develop as youth advocates and raise their voice against stigma and discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Community of Practice

- 282 Organizations participated in regular learning, data and insights cross-sharing around engaging youth in decision making, thematic priorities for government engagements and expanding funding opportunities, among other things
- 12+ Online events and workshops conducted with members of the CoP, on topics of investment in adolescents, digital inclusion, findings from the impact of COVID survey, etc.
- 111 Youth-serving NGOs surveyed to understand the Impact of COVID on adolescents, resulting in a new evidence report ("Lost in Lockdown").

## Government Engagements

140+ letters written by adolescent girls to their elected representatives explaining how their schools and communities can be improved to provide better adolescent focused services. 45 articles published in locally popular newspapers and featured on two news channels 1 high-level meeting convergent meeting hosted at the Jharkhand secretary level on adolescent issues



Knowledge Products



Toolkit for Advocacy

Ab Meri Baari is a nation-wide initiative of Dasra to create normative change and drive social accountability through communications and advocacy. The objective is an increase in the efficacy and agency of adolescents, especially girls (between 10 to 19 years of age) and impact their decision making and understanding on education, sexual and reproductive health and early marriage.



Watch the film



View the website



# KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 10to19 DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

The early years of the Collaborative, and the multi-stakeholder approach that it brought to the table, came with its own few set of experiences, challenges and roadmaps that offered the Collaborative a few learnings.

- **There is no singular or one-size-fits-all solution:**

Each collaborative has its own unique agenda, dynamics, and local solutions required to leverage the strengths of each stakeholder and ensure effective collaborative action.

- **Build feedback loops and track progress:**

Throughout the implementation process, there is a need to maintain strong feedback loops between all stakeholders. This is critical for driving alignment, enabling agility and quick learning, and allowing for course correction in a collaborative. Formally tracking progress towards short-to-long-term goals is also key to any multi-stakeholder collaborative's implementation. Together, regular feedback and measurement of progress serve several important functions.

- **Ensure Adolescent Participation:**

Based on the triangulation of conversations with key stakeholders and the current sector landscape, it seems crucial to engage adolescent population in decision making platforms and processes through youth serving organizations. This can lead to building championship of adolescent needs at the highest levels of decision making in policy, investment and programs. Further, narrative change approach enables amplification of adolescent voices and builds prioritization within the government.

Moving forward, DAC will continue to prioritize the following:

- A core focus on the centrality of adolescent voices and participation through youth serving organizations and the Community of Practice
- Focus on building championship of adolescent needs, especially at the highest levels of decision making in policy, investment and programs
- Using narrative change approach to amplify the adolescent voice and build prioritization with government in Jharkhand and Central Government



## Return on Investment for Funders

At a time when some of India's most pressing and complex social problems are too big to tackle alone, it is clear that collaborative action is no longer an option, but a necessity. Collaboratives, if designed and implemented effectively, have the potential to magnify the sum of each partner's contributions, demonstrate measurable results beyond what any single organization or individual can deliver, and enable the systemic change at the scale required to achieve India's SDGs. The Dasra Adolescents Collaborative's achievements and journey, too, have a testimony to this.

Across DAC's stakeholders, what has emerged as DAC's key success and biggest value add is in building visibility around adolescent issues and building a shared identity around championing holistic adolescent needs with funders and government.

Engaging with Dasra through the Adolescents Collaborative provided varied and deep learning avenues, enabling funders to become more effective in their grant making journeys. Besides witnessing the impact on ground that their contribution had made on ground, funders were able to:

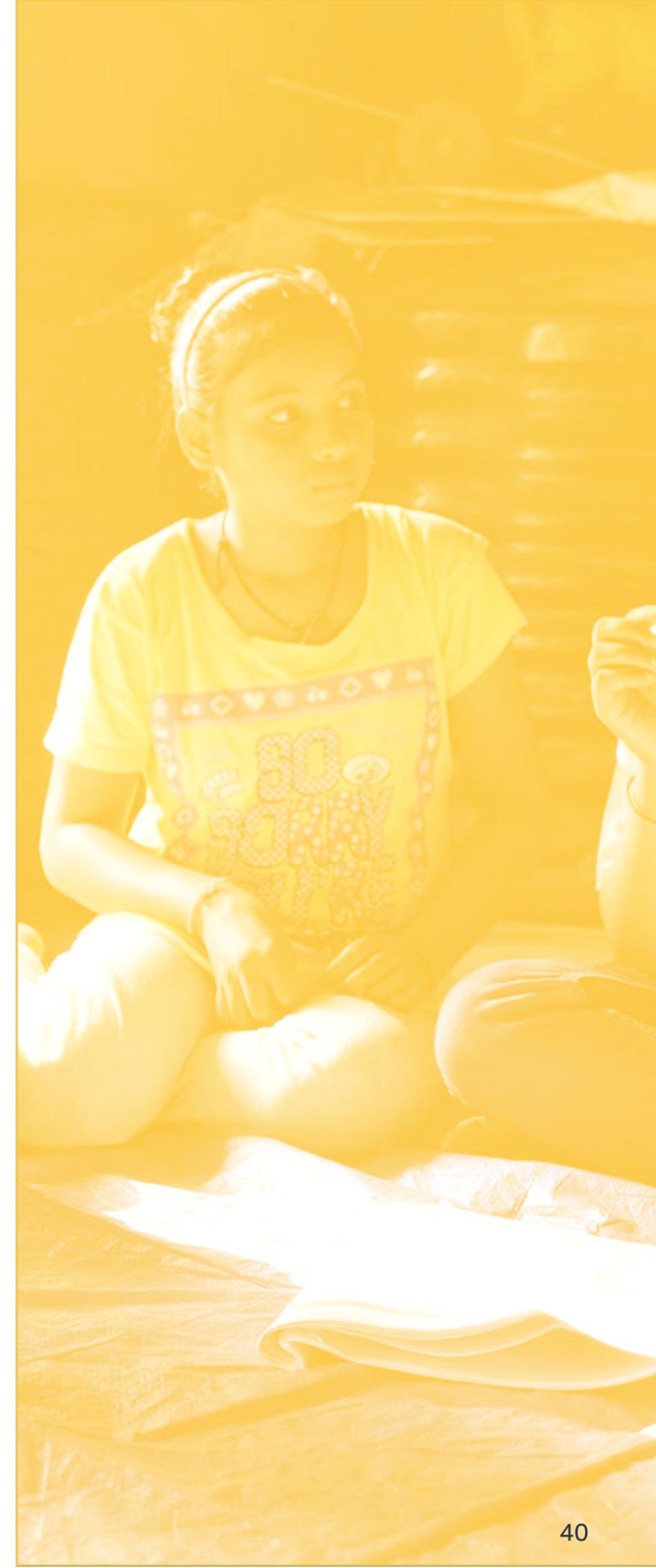
- Engage in interactions and discussions with implementing nonprofits through regular meetings and gatherings where organizations discussed programmatic successes and challenges, the realities of on-ground programming, and areas of collaboration.
- Engage with funders with a range of funders that differ in their funding journeys and histories, gaining insight and learnings into what it means to invest in the development sector in India.
- Gain access to wider networks through partner networks, workshops, gatherings, large-scale social sector events, and roundtables for different curated audiences to allow different stakeholders in the sector to network, debate and discuss.
- Gain access to rich sector-focused and theme-based research and knowledge pieces
- Be part of evidence creation, and gain regular access to robust data measurement system, and insights into how to build a data aggregated system that monitors data from the ground across multiple programs, codifies impact and determines 'what works'.
- Have the opportunity to hear the voice of the government, and understand how policy-level decisions are made at the state and central level through frequently-hosted consultations and events.
- Have the chance to learn from and interact with the 10to19 Community of Practice, learn how campaigns are built from scratch, and how they are disseminated strategically for national-level policy discussions. regular access to our knowledge products.

Despite these stated benefits, it is important to note that collaboration is a difficult road to traverse – it needs extensive investments in time, effort and resources, and the diversity of stakeholder needs calls for a readiness to give up control and often dissolve individual agendas. Determining the relevance of a collaborative approach is therefore a vital first step. The following are some key learnings and considerations that may help determine when this approach makes sense:

- **Complexity of Problem:** Collaborative action is appropriate for problems that need systemic change that is beyond the capacity of any one organization or sector.
- **Timing:** A collaborative model only makes sense if the sector seems ready for collaborative action and is not already teeming with similar initiatives that one can join forces with.
- **Funding:** Collaborative action models need significant upfront investment, largely for core costs, with long expected gestation periods. It is worth exploring funder appetite for such an initiative before mobilizing a collaborative action model.

## Dasra's Value Add for Stakeholders

- Funders saw value in the role of an intermediary like Dasra for forging a closer connect to field realities and bringing the adolescent voices and their needs to the funder community. They were able to get deeper insights from the ground into the lives of vulnerable communities, and could witness the impact that their funding was leading towards.
- NGOs saw value in Dasra's ability to help them connect with the funder community and communicate their work effectively and build visibility with funders to diversify funding, while growing as an organisation through the capacity building and leadership support they received. With the growing multi-stakeholder network and 10to19 Community of Practice, the NGOs were even able to get a larger audience for their impact stories, research material, experiences on ground and cross-learning.
- The government saw value in engaging with an entity that could present multiple adolescent perspectives and were able to hear adolescent voices on key platforms through on-ground campaigns and evidence-based research that Dasra and their partners were facilitating across target geographies.



**10to19** Community   
DASHA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE