ADVANCING SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS

THE PROBLEM
Across the globe, women and girls face discrimination and alarming rates of violence. An estimated one in three women will be physically abused during her lifetime and will experience sexual violence or some other form of violence. In some developing countries, the numbers are even more devastating.

In addition, many women and girls lack the autonomy, knowledge and community support to make critical decisions about their health, education, professions, sexuality, relationships and marriage. For example, 15 million girls under the age of 18 enter into early or forced marriages each year, making them more prone to a wide range of problems: they are more likely to be illiterate, live in poverty, face domestic violence and die in childbirth.

Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in many places face harassment, discrimination, violence and even murder. Many are ostracized simply for who they are or whom they love. Sadly, more than 75 countries have enshrined hatred and bigotry into law, making homosexuality illegal—punishable by prison terms and, in some cases, by death.

WE BELIEVE EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO:
- Pursue equal opportunities in society without limitations based on gender or sexual orientation
- Make decisions about their body, health and life
- Live free from violence, abuse and hate

OUR SOLUTION
To counter these challenges, AJWS supports 154 social change organizations working to advance the human rights of women, girls and LGBTI people. Our courageous grantees are on the frontlines fighting discrimination, educating communities about their health and rights, combating violence and hate crimes, and ensuring that women, girls and LGBTI people can live healthy lives and pursue their aspirations with dignity.

We are helping grassroots groups grow stronger and more sustainable, lending them visibility and ensuring their concerns are included in broader social change efforts at the local, national and global levels to build strong movements capable of ushering in lasting change.
OUR IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

The activists, organizations and movements we support are making progress in their communities and around the globe:

- Amid ongoing cases of sexual violence against women in India, Vanangana, SANGRAM and Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives lobbied to strengthen India’s weak anti-rape laws. In March of 2013, their efforts helped bring about the passage of a new law that prohibits sexual harassment, stalking and other related offenses and broadens the legal definition of rape. In Democratic Republic of Congo in 2015, female survivors of sexual violence won 214 court cases against their abusers with legal aid from AJWS grantees SOFEPADI and DFJ.

- In 2014, AJWS and Nirantar Trust in India published a groundbreaking analysis of the root causes of child marriage and recommendations to eradicate it. The findings have influenced funders and innovative, local organizations empowering girls to make their own choices about their futures.

- Lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in Nicaragua, who had long faced harassment and discrimination when they visited hospitals and health clinics, now have a safe place to receive quality healthcare after Grupo Safo persuaded the country’s health department to open Central America’s first health clinic for LBT women in 2013.

- In Kenya, Persons Marginalized and Ag grieved (PEMA) educates police, community leaders and religious figures who have been heard fomenting hatred against gay and trans people. As a result of this project, PEMA reports a decrease in police violence and a reduction in hate speech from local pulpits.

- AJWS and its supporters relentlessly advocated for—and achieved—the appointment of the first-ever U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons in 2015. The creation of this post within the State Department sent a clear message that protecting the human rights of LGBT people worldwide was a U.S. priority.

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OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS defends civil and political rights, advances sexual health and rights, promotes climate justice, and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide.