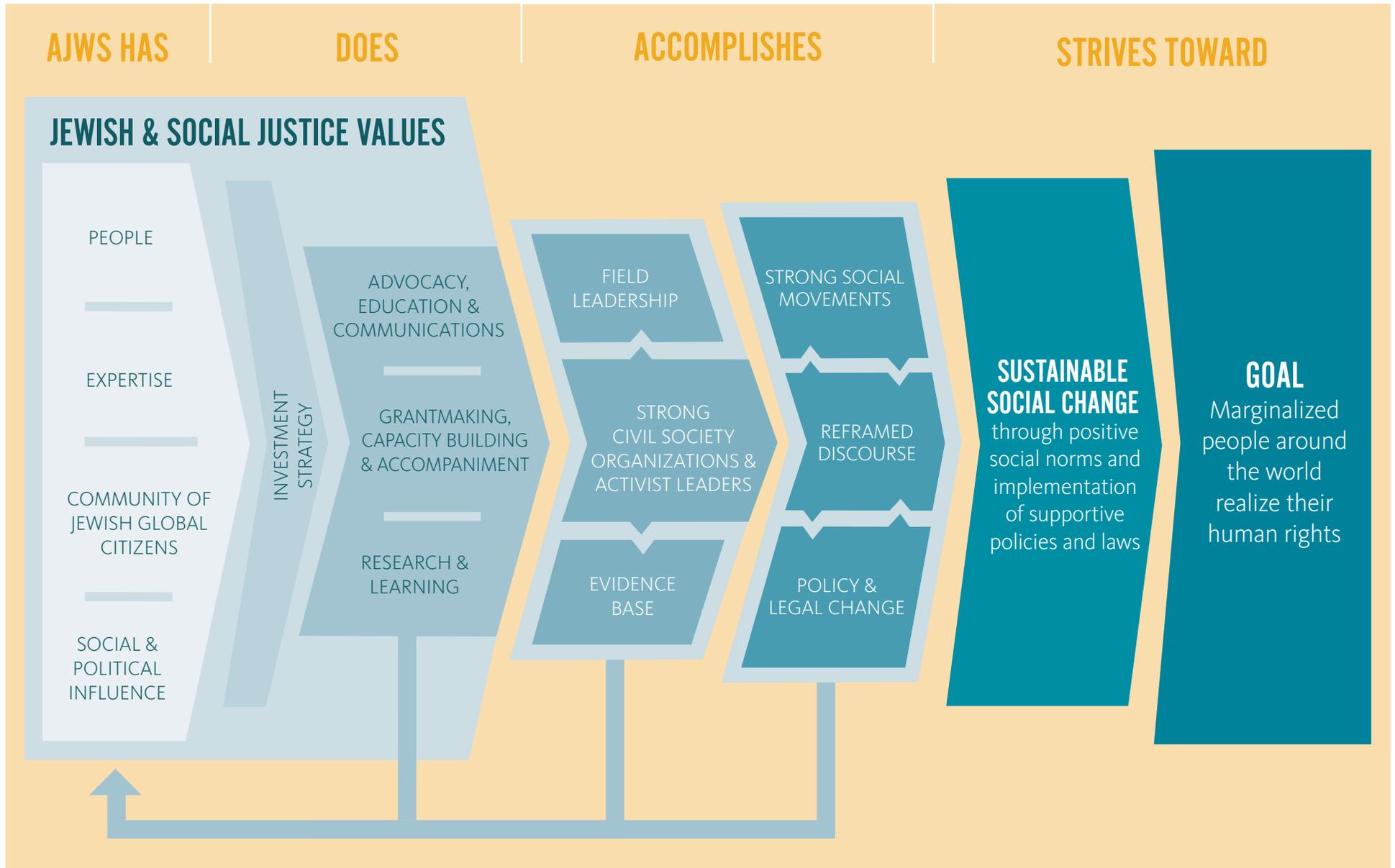


AJWS'S THEORY OF CHANGE

This illustration depicts AJWS's unique formula for advancing social change in pursuit of our mission to empower marginalized people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to realize their human rights. A theory of change enables our community to align our efforts; increase our transparency, accountability and credibility; measure results against a clear blueprint for success; and ultimately strengthen what we achieve together.





AJWS THEORY OF CHANGE

Definition of Terms

WHO WE ARE

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the leading Jewish organization working to promote human rights and end poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. AJWS defends civil and political rights; advances sexual health and rights; promotes land rights and climate justice; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in 18 countries and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide. Working together, we're striving to build a more just and equitable world—today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

While the 21st century has introduced progress in global health and poverty, emerging and persistent threats continue to undermine the rights and dignity of people around the world today. Authoritarian governments, unjust laws and civil wars rob people of their civil liberties, claim lives and create climates of fear. Rising voices of intolerance, racism, prejudice and xenophobia make parts of the world unsafe for people whose skin color, ethnicity, nationality, beliefs or sexual orientation are stigmatized. Women, girls and LGBTQI+ people face violence, discrimination, and repression of their freedoms, aspirations and opportunities. Deadly disasters tied to climate change strike ever more frequently, claiming lives and destroying communities. Exploitative development of the earth's remaining natural resources forces some of the world's poorest people from the land they depend on for survival.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

In the face of the grave challenges described in our Problem Statement, AJWS remains hopeful, because we are engaged every day in countering bigotry with tolerance, poverty with opportunity, hate with love, and war with peace.

The AJWS community and thousands of activists around the globe are knitting our ruptured world back together, one day, one voice and one action at a time.

Our approach is rooted in our millennia-old value of caring for the stranger and understanding that the people most affected by a problem are best positioned to solve it. We strive to empower and amplify the voices of people who have themselves experienced discrimination, inequality, oppression and violence—enabling them to build strategic organizations and mobilize strong movements to realize their human rights. We do this because we believe it is effective and because our own historical experience of oppression instructs us to stand up for those who are oppressed today and to bolster their ability to shape their own destinies.

AJWS's Theory of Change outlines the assets, actions, and accomplishments that—over time and through significant investments—advance our goal that marginalized people around the world will realize their human rights. By this, we mean that we support people who are impoverished, oppressed, excluded or silenced to organize to build just societies—grounded in democratic values, anchored by human rights, committed to gender equality and rooted in the belief in the essential dignity of every person.

AJWS HAS

The assets that position us to make a difference

JEWISH & SOCIAL JUSTICE VALUES

Our values underpin our work and propel us toward our goal. These values are the Jewish commitment to justice; our universal belief in the importance of human rights for all; and our five organizational “core values”: the essential dignity of every human being, sense of possibility, partnership and community, initiative and accountability, and humility.

PEOPLE

AJWS is driven by people who share common values and are dedicated to promoting a grassroots and feminist approach to advancing human rights. Our team of professional staff and board and the organizations and movements we support are bonded by this worldview, enabling us to connect, collaborate and build trusting relationships with fellow activists, influential leaders, donors and supporters, and to work together to advance social change.

EXPERTISE

The deep knowledge and know-how held by our staff, in-country representatives, partners and grantees puts AJWS on the cutting edge of the field of human rights.

COMMUNITY OF JEWISH GLOBAL CITIZENS

Powerfully motivated by the Jewish responsibility to pursue justice and our commitment to act on the lessons of Jewish history, our supporters fuel AJWS’s mission with activism, engagement and financial support.

SOCIAL & POLITICAL INFLUENCE

AJWS’s staff experts, board, grantees and allies possess social and political capital that enables our global community to influence decision makers at the local and global levels. By doing this, we further our field leadership, advance our advocacy and enhance our fundraising to advance human rights.

AJWS DOES

Our work to advance human rights

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

AJWS focuses on four key areas of human rights: We defend civil and political rights; advance sexual health and rights; promote natural resource rights and climate justice; and aid communities in the aftermath of disasters. We develop comprehensive strategies for each issue on which we work and for each country where we work, based on our deep and ongoing analysis of the problems we address and of the social and political landscape. These strategies enable us to identify the best investments (in grantees, advocacy and research) and then track our progress toward milestones, outcomes and our longer-term goals in each country, as we advance our work in pursuit of social change.

This investment model sharpens our focus, increases our impact and makes our resources go farther. It enables us to attract influential allies to contribute to and collaborate with us on building a more just world—including fellow grantmakers; key opinion leaders in business, government and civil society; and more than 170,000 dedicated supporters.

ADVOCACY, EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS

AJWS conducts advocacy and digital engagement in the U.S. and globally to call attention to human rights abuses, amplify the voices of our grantees, grow our community and educate and mobilize our supporters. Together, we strive to influence U.S. and global laws, policies and social norms to improve the lives of millions of people around the world.

GRANTMAKING, CAPACITY BUILDING & ACCOMPANIMENT

AJWS supports 519 social change organizations in 18 countries that advance social change in our four key human rights areas. Exercising rigorous due diligence, our representatives in each country identify the most promising and effective activists and organizations to fund—focusing particularly on those who work with women, minorities and others who experience the most severe discrimination, oppression or exclusion from society. We invest in trusted relationships with our grantees; listen to and learn from them; and build their capacity with tailored trainings and support. We connect them to peer organizations and national and global networks and advocacy spaces to support the growth of movements and facilitate change. We refer to this process of bolstering our grantees as “accompaniment.”

RESEARCH & LEARNING

AJWS conducts research to evaluate and strengthen our own work and advance the broader field of human rights. We collect meaningful data on our grantmaking and the human rights issues we address. We consistently hone our thinking and strategies based on new evidence. We share our research with our grantees and we study and promote their research. We do this to ensure that we learn from one another, amplify the voices of our grantees in human rights movements, and influence the public discourse on effective approaches to social change.

AJWS ACCOMPLISHES

Our achievements in pursuit of realizing human rights

FIELD LEADERSHIP

All of our efforts contribute to advancing the leadership, credibility and influence of AJWS and our grantees, giving us greater capacity to effect change collectively—both in the communities where we work and in global policy and advocacy arenas. We further advance our leadership by participating in key human rights forums, collaborating with important stakeholders, and leading coalitions that further our mission and goal.

STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS & ACTIVIST LEADERS

Through our grantmaking and our support for building the capacity of the organizations we fund, we foster the growth of strong, capable organizations and activists that are equipped to meet the complex needs of the communities they serve; effectively educate, organize and mobilize people to participate in social change; and build powerful movements advocating for justice. By strengthening grassroots organizations and activist leaders, we ensure that those most affected by injustice are at the center of conversations about solutions—in their communities, nationally and globally.

EVIDENCE BASE

AJWS invests in local documentation as well as research to build a body of evidence that can be used by civil society

organizations and social movements to expose human rights abuses, reframe the discourse on key issues and advocate for policy and legislative change.

STRONG SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Through our grantmaking and accompaniment in 18 countries and our work to mobilize activists in the U.S., AJWS, our grantees and our allies are organizing and uniting communities into strong movements of people advocating for and pursuing change together.

REFRAMED DISCOURSE

AJWS and our grantees are influencing both local and global conversations about human rights and development to ensure that decision makers and communities understand and address the root causes of inequality. In this way, AJWS ensures that we are bringing about sustained change that fosters respect for and supports the needs of those most affected by injustice.

POLICY & LEGAL CHANGE

AJWS and our grantees are achieving concrete legal and legislative victories and are ensuring that laws and policies are implemented—in the U.S., in the countries where we work and around the world.

CONTINUALLY REINVESTING OUR RESOURCES

As we do our work, we continually reinvest what we've learned and gained—bolstering our assets and actions. For example, as we collaborate with our grantees, they become our long-term, trusted partners. As we build a growing body of evidence for what works and what doesn't, this knowledge strengthens our investment strategies. As our collective

field leadership increases, we expand our social and political influence. And as we change laws and policies, strengthen social movements and reframe the discourse on human rights, this further strengthens our social and political influence and informs our investment strategies. Our core assets thus continue to appreciate and the cycle of learning for change continues to take us to new heights.

AJWS STRIVES TOWARD

The change we work toward

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL CHANGE

By changing laws and the social norms that perpetuate prejudice, inequality and injustice—and by strengthening the ability of civil society organizations and movements to ensure the implementation of these changes—AJWS contributes to deep and lasting change at every level of society—from families to communities to governments.

GOAL

We pursue our ultimate goal: a world in which marginalized people around the globe realize their human rights. By this we mean that we support people who are impoverished, oppressed, excluded or silenced to organize to build just societies grounded in democratic values, anchored by human rights, committed to gender equality and rooted in the belief in the essential dignity of every person.