



# The Revolutionary Optimists

# Table of Contents



- 1 Using this Guide
- 2 From the Filmmaker
- 3 The Film
- 4–5 Background Information
  - 4 Child Labor in India
  - 5 Access to Clean Water
  - 5 Polio Immunization
- 6–8 Children Get Organized Around the World
  - 7 Children as Agents of Change
  - 7 Map Your World
  - 8 Equal Opportunity for Girls
- 9 Topics Relevant to  
*The Revolutionary Optimists*
- 9 Thinking More Deeply
- 10 Suggestions for Action
- 11 Resources
- 12 Credits

# Using this Guide



**Community Cinema** is a rare public forum: a space for people to gather who are connected by a love of stories, and a belief in their power to change the world. This discussion guide is designed as a tool to facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in the film *The Revolutionary Optimists*. It is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the show—but to step up and take action. This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive primer on a given topic. Rather, it provides important context, and raises thought provoking questions to encourage viewers to think more deeply. We provide suggestions for areas to explore in panel discussions, in the classroom, in communities, and online. We also provide valuable resources, and connections to organizations on the ground that are fighting to make a difference.

For information about the program, visit [www.communitycinema.org](http://www.communitycinema.org)





# From the Filmmaker

Five years ago, we were searching the world for agents of great change. Our goal was lofty: to film people who were making tangible, scalable change in the most intractable problems of global health—access to clean water, malnutrition, infectious diseases, infant mortality—problems so huge they seem impossible to solve, but so bad that you have to try. Our original concept was to make several short films, each about someone tackling a different issue. But in 2007, when we read about the hotheaded Bengali attorney Amlan Ganguly, a former Ashoka fellow and the charismatic founder of Prayasam, everything changed.

Here was someone who, with little more than scrap paper turned into megaphones, homemade puppets, and determination, had led children to make incredible improvements in one of Kolkata's worst slums. Trash dumps were turned into playing fields. Electricity was brought to the slum where before children used to climb and pull the wires illegally, at great risk to themselves. How did he do it?

The first time we called Ganguly, he hung up on us. He was too busy with "his children," and asked us to call back at 2 AM his time. His time, it turned out, is different than most people's. His recipe for success involves huge amounts of patience—waiting calmly for the right moment to pounce and advocate for a certain change—as well as passion, instinct, and tireless dedication.

Ganguly's ultimate mission—which sounds quixotic but is actually working—is to change the aspiration level of the children to believe that they deserve more, even if their parents have given up hope—or, as he says, "If you change your mindset, you can change your surroundings." Slowly the children's consciousness is raised: Why shouldn't they have access to clean water? Why should a young girl be forced to choose marriage instead of education? And it works—even when the children's gains are incremental steps, like one child deciding to try to become a tailor where once she only saw a future carrying bricks on her head, they are the foundations for generational change, which without these baby steps will never come.

In order to gain the trust of Ganguly, the children, and their families, we needed to do more than maintain a journalist / subject relationship with them. We needed to become their partners. Together, we have all been on an incredible five-year journey, during which we've lived both heartbreak and success—witnessing incredibly talented and tenacious youth whose dreams are crushed by the weight of tradition and oppression, but also watching bright 10-year-old children from the most desperate circumstances grow into powerful advocates for change.

And throughout it, as we filmed, the community was meaningfully transformed: the children doubled the number of children being immunized for polio by personally carrying the babies to the vaccination booth—and they fought and won the right for girls to play outside.

We agreed from the outset that this kind of longitudinal documentary was the only way to tell the story. Ganguly's model is holistic, encouraging communities to seek change on multiple levels. If you want to make a change in waterborne disease, you have to get clean water. If you want to help end child marriage, you have to empower girls to get educated. And if you want families to educate their girls you have to help give them access to economic opportunity. All of these things are interrelated; you can't just step in and address one issue. We wanted our film to show these interrelations, and to show how powerful, if slow, this method for alleviating poverty can be. That required time and staying with individual characters as their inner and outer landscapes changed. We hope that audiences will learn from seeing this process unfold, that some will replicate Ganguly's techniques, inspired by this sustainable model for making change.

We also hope that the story will inspire youth to feel empowered as potential revolutionaries, which is why we have developed the multiplatform tool Map Your World in partnership with the children in our film—so that youth everywhere can become agents of change in their communities.

Filming *The Revolutionary Optimists*, we experienced something spectacular: young children, showing us how patience and determination can solve some of the most pressing problems of our time. We hope that people who see this film will walk away empowered, with a vision of how true, sustainable, slow and yet monumental change can happen.



Nicole Newnham and Maren Grainger-Monsen



# The Film

There are sixty-five slums in Kolkata, India, marked by extreme crowding, lack of running water, sanitation, or any government services. Children in these very impoverished communities, instead of attending school, work to help support their families. The Rishi Aurobindo Colony is one such community—a squatters' colony of nine thousand people where Amlan Ganguly empowers children to become change agents who can transform their neighborhood and dramatically improve their lives. Filmed over the course of several years, *The Revolutionary Optimists* follows Ganguly and three of the children he works with on an intimate journey through adolescence as they fight for the better future he encourages them to imagine is deservedly theirs.

Ganguly was trained as a lawyer, but left that profession to found Prayasam, an organization that works to ensure the basic rights of children, especially their right to all-around development and protection. Ganguly doesn't rescue children; rather, he teaches them the skills they need to make meaningful changes that will set them on a path to a better future. *Prayasam*, which means "their own endeavors," trains children to be advocates for improved health and sanitation in their neighborhoods. Their endeavors include encouraging people to have their babies vaccinated and mounting a campaign to get a tap with drinking water in their community. Prayasam also puts girls and boys on an equal footing in the group's activities, with additional efforts to keep girls from marrying young before they have a chance to develop their skills and recognize their opportunities.

Kajal, a 12-year-old girl, is one of nine million Indian children who live and work inside a brickfield. When Ganguly creates the first school inside the brickfield, Kajal has a chance to have an education and begin working toward her goal of becoming a tailor. But when her mother becomes unable to work, Kajal and Ganguly must find a way to balance her desire to learn with her need to support her mother. This is done through regular visits by a tutor, who provides Kajal with the necessary educational materials.

Priyanka is the 16-year-old leader of a dance troupe founded by Ganguly to keep girls in school and dissuade them from early marriage. Beset by problems at home from a family that is

unsupportive and abusive, Priyanka is feeling increasing pressure to find a way out. In spite of Ganguly's efforts to keep her in school, she finally chooses to elope and marry her young boyfriend, even though this means losing her position in the dance group and her chance at an education, as well as being subject to the traditional expectations of her in-laws and physical abuse by her husband.

Salim is an 11-year-old boy—energetic, enthusiastic, and articulate—who pours his energy into efforts to change his slum community. Along with other family members, he takes his turn to leave home in the dark predawn hours to steal water from a neighboring slum, as there is no water in his colony. Working with Shikha, his former classmate, who is equally energetic and articulate and a girl who is not afraid to speak her mind, Salim and other child activists map their community and collect data about the problems they face. Armed with this information, they hope to convince the government to give them a water tap.

The final messages of the film are hopeful ones: Shikha expresses her belief that girls should not passively accept their fate, but find their place in life through their work and other actions. The brickfield school model has spread to other parts of India, and the children's efforts have resulted in a doubling of polio vaccination rates in their neighborhood. But they are still waiting to hear from the government about their water tap.

## Selected Individuals Featured in *The Revolutionary Optimists*

### Amlan Ganguly—Founder of Prayasam

#### *Prayasam participants:*

**Shikha Patro**

**Salim Sheikh**

**Kajal Kahar**

**Priyanka Mandal**

**Mitu Das**



# Background Information

## A Sketch of Kolkata

Kolkata (also known as Calcutta) is the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. It is a city of contrasts: A former colonial capital under British rule, Kolkata is the center of Indian intellectual life and art. It boasts hundreds of theaters and a lively film industry, produces hundreds of literary magazines, and sponsors an annual book show attracting some two million visitors. Kolkata is also where Mother Theresa ministered to the poor and the sick. The city became a magnet for the rural poor after the partitioning of India in the late 1940s. With a population of 4.5 million in the city itself and about 14 million in the metropolitan area, Kolkata lacks sufficient infrastructure and jobs to accommodate the huge population explosion it has experienced since the end of World War II, and it has been in a condition of serious decline for decades. Kolkata is plagued by extreme air pollution, drinking water contaminated by lead from the pipes that carry it, a limited sewer system that fails during the annual monsoon season, and unreliable electricity.

Kolkata's population density is more than thirty thousand per square kilometer. Over two-thirds of the population live in slums, of which there are two types: the *bustees*, which are officially authorized and contain somewhat durable structures, and *squatter settlements*, where the conditions are marked by squalor, with dwellings made of plastic and other flimsy materials, and no sanitation, electricity, or other amenities. Residents of these unregistered squatter slums are unable to get legal identity papers, have no documents to prove their address, and are thus denied any services or rights as citizens. They are literally "off the map."

### Sources:

- » <http://www.dados.org/int/vorbilder/vorbilder/theresa/hintergrund.htm>
- » [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global\\_Report/cities/kolkata.htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/cities/kolkata.htm)
- » <http://www.actionaid.org/india/projects/urban-poverty-alleviation-calcutta-kolkata>

## Child Labor in India

India has the largest number of child workers (under the age of 14) in the world. Government estimates of child laborers put the number at about 17.5 million, but estimates by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations are much higher. This is because some methods of counting omit children who work for their families or those who are also in school. In some cases local governments fail to even conduct an assessment of child labor for a period of time. Government figures show that over half of the working children (54 percent) are in agriculture, many of them employed by multinational companies. Others are employed in construction (15 percent), household work (18 percent) or manufacturing jobs (5 percent). The remaining 8 percent are scattered across other forms of employment.

### Sources:

- » <http://indiatogogether.org/photo/2006/chi-labour.htm> and <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/sweat/india.htm>

### Causes and consequences

Although the Indian Constitution and a variety of laws place prohibitions on child labor, these laws are ignored by employers and not enforced by the government. As in other countries where this phenomenon exists (see *sidebar*), child labor is rooted in poverty. Parents commonly rely on children's income to help support the family. In many cases, children take over domestic chores in order to free up parents to work. Parents may also place their children into bonded labor, a situation in which the parent receives a loan in exchange for the child's labor for a certain period of time, usually years. Child abandonment is a common side effect of urban poverty in places such as Kolkata, forcing children to work in order to survive and leaving them vulnerable to sex traffickers and other criminal elements.

Child labor may have short-term beneficial effects for the family, but in the long term, it is of very little help either to the child or



to society. Children who work are most likely not in school and thus not learning skills that will help them advance in the future. Without an education they cannot participate in the skilled workforce needed for the country's economic and social improvement. And certain jobs, such as working in pesticide-laden farm fields, present health hazards with long-term detrimental effects.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.azadindia.org/social-issues/child-labour-in-india.html>
- » <http://indiatogether.org/photo/2006/chi-labour.htm>

**Beyond India...**

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO):

- Globally, one in six children work.
- Approximately 218 million children aged 5 to 17 are involved in child labor worldwide.
- Roughly 126 million children work in hazardous conditions.
- The highest number of child laborers is in the Asia/Pacific region, where there are 122 million working children.
- The highest proportion of child laborers is in sub-Saharan Africa, where 26% of children (49 million) are involved in work.

**Source:**

- » <http://crin.org/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=3>

## Access to Clean Water

Globally, 780 million people lack access to clean water and 3.4 million people—roughly the number of people in Los Angeles—die each year from a water-related disease. India is at the epicenter of the global water crisis. The country's population growth and industry boom over the last 20 years, combined with the demands of a largely agrarian society, have severely strained its water supply. Although India's government has made some progress in increasing the supply of safe water to its people, 128 million still lack safe water and 839 million have no sanitation services.

Women and children are particularly affected by the lack of clean water. Entrenched gender roles place the burden of gathering water on women and girls in much of the developing world. Collectively, women spend two hundred million hours each day fetching water for themselves, their families, and their communities. Because of their developing immune systems, children and infants are more vulnerable to contaminants—most commonly fecal matter—found in water. Every 20 seconds, a child somewhere in the world dies from a water-related disease.

**Sources:**

- » <http://water.org> and <http://www.forbes.com/sites/ericagies/2011/09/26/access-to-water-may-limit-indias-development/>

## Polio Immunization

Polio is an infectious viral disease transmitted through person-to-person contact, which mainly affects young children. One in two hundred infections leads to irreversible paralysis, usually in the legs. Although there is no cure for polio, infection can be prevented through immunization. Widespread vaccination campaigns during the twentieth century have eliminated the threat of polio in the Western Hemisphere. In the United States, for example, it is recommended that children receive a polio vaccine at 2 months and 4 months of age. Polio remains a threat of epidemic proportions in Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan due to a lack of access to immunization. India has had success in interrupting transmission of the disease. Once considered one of the toughest places to eradicate polio, India experienced its first year without a single polio case reported in 2012.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/timelines/polio>,
- » [http://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/news\\_routine\\_polio\\_immunization\\_position\\_paper\\_2010/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/news_routine_polio_immunization_position_paper_2010/en/index.html), and <http://www.polioeradication.org/Infectedcountries.aspx>

# Children Get Organized

# Around the World

During the last two to three decades, working children's organizations have arisen in Africa, Asia, and South America, representing tens of thousands of working children. The organizations developed in the context of governments' pursuit of economic policies that resulted in extensive social dislocation, large-scale migration of rural populations to cities, and poverty that necessitated children having to work to help support their families. Early initiatives were begun by religious activists and later taken up by others from nonchurch backgrounds, including trade unions, community associations, and NGOs. Underpinning these organizations is the 1989 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, which confers on children and young people the right to participate in decisions about issues that affect them and the right to organize. The work of these movements is founded on the belief that everyone is of value and has a contribution to make, but there is a split in the goals they hope to attain. Some are clearly focused on banning child labor, especially for those under the age of 14. Others support the right of children to work and, until governments eliminate the conditions of poverty, they seek regulations to protect young workers from abuse and exploitation and provide for their education. Here are some of the major organizations run by and for children:

## Source:

» <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=849&flag=report>

## In India

In 1990, the Concerned for Working Children (CWC), a nonprofit organization, facilitated the formation of Bhima Sangha, a union of working children in the state of Karnataka, which has taken effective action against employers who exploit and abuse child workers. It now represents more than sixteen thousand children and is one of more than a dozen working children's organizations and unions that make up the National Movement of Working Children (NMWC). Formed in November 1999 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the NMWC works to uphold children's rights and eliminate the causes of child labor, with the goal of ensuring that children do not have to work and that children in the generations to come will have a better quality of life.

## Sources:

» <http://www.workingchild.org/prota2b.htm>

» <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/the-right-organize-the-working-childrens-movement-india>

## In Africa

The African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) was created in 1994. As of March 2007, the AMWCY network included 80 associations from 20 African countries. It is made up of about 728 grassroots groups representing more than thirty-seven thousand active members; roughly 70 percent of them are below age 18, and 53 percent of members are girls. Members include housemaids, girls who are vendors in the market, independent working children and youth, as well as female and male apprentices.

## Source:

» <http://childrensparticipation.blogspot.ca/2007/10/movements-of-organised-working-children.html>

## In Peru

The first organization of working children in Latin America was the Movement of Working Children and Adolescents from Christian Working Class Families (Movimiento de Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores Hijos de Obreros Cristianos; MANTHOC). Established in 1976 as an initiative of the members of the Peruvian branch of the Young Christian Workers movement (YCW), MANTHOC includes children and adolescents aged 6 to 18; being a Christian is no longer a condition for joining. MANTHOC encourages children to be protagonistas, that is, agents of change.

## Source:

» [http://www.childlabour.net/documents/unionsproject/Unions\\_Peru\\_2007.pdf](http://www.childlabour.net/documents/unionsproject/Unions_Peru_2007.pdf)

## In Brazil

The National Movement of Street Boys and Girls (Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua; MNMMR) was founded in 1985 by volunteers from various religious, governmental, and community organizations. MNMMR supports children and adolescents in their own struggle for securing and defending their rights as citizens. It played a major role in exposing the killing of children by death squads. Focused primarily on the education and civic involvement of children and adolescents, MNMMR encourages young people to actively participate in decisions about their lives, their communities, and society in general.

## Source:

» [http://pangaea.org/street\\_children/latin/mnmmr.htm](http://pangaea.org/street_children/latin/mnmmr.htm)



# Children as Agents of Change

While not specifically dedicated to the cause of working children, Prayasam is part of a tradition that supports children's rights and teaches them to make their voices heard in order to advocate for changes that will improve their communities (*see sidebar*).

Once they are empowered to speak up and work on their own behalf and on behalf of their communities, children can be very effective change agents. In places such as the squatters' colonies of Kolkata, children are regarded as trustworthy communicators, without a hidden political agenda. Numerous projects in developing countries have had success with both peer-to-peer and child-to-adult methods of spreading information on health care, sanitation, and water issues (*see Resources for examples*).

But helping children to become change agents is not always an easy process. According to a World Vision report supported by the Children's Rights Information Network, it means "challenging children's traditional roles in society and transforming the relationships of power between adults and children." Letting children take the lead in a community-improvement project or a lobbying effort to obtain a service or amenity requires adults to step back from their familiar take-charge role into the less comfortable position of support staff. When helping children to become empowered, there are a number of important guidelines to follow.

## CAVEATS

1. **Respect the views of the child.** Allow children to define a problem or issue based on their experience and perspective.
2. **Build ownership.** Let children define the goals and gather the information and resources needed to pursue those goals.
3. **Address power imbalances.** Define the adult's role (e.g., advisor, facilitator) and how the adult will interact with the process so that children remain in the lead.
4. **Create child-friendly information.** This applies to descriptions, both written and oral, of the project and the work process and any suggested communication for children to use in explaining their project to the wider community.
5. **Build support through relationships with the parents and guardians of the participating children.** Take advantage of opportunities to meet with parents and guardians, formally or informally, to explain the goals and process of the children's participation.
6. **Put child protection policies in place.** This includes proper screening of adults who will work with the children, and clear lines of adult responsibility in vetting activities undertaken by the children, to ensure that they are well structured and appropriate for the age and skills of the children. Also included here are confidentiality issues concerning information about the children.

7. **Get informed consent.** Transparency and clear communication about what the children will be doing is essential. Consent needs to come from the child as well as from parents or guardians.

## Adapted from

» [http://www.crin.org/docs/Guidelines\\_for\\_Child\\_Participation\\_in\\_CRC\\_Reporting.pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/Guidelines_for_Child_Participation_in_CRC_Reporting.pdf).

# Map Your World

Map Your World is a multiplatform project that puts the power of new technologies into the hands of young change agents, enabling them to map, track, and improve the health of their own communities—and then share their stories of change with each other and with the world. Map Your World is an outgrowth of *The Revolutionary Optimists*, in which a group of Kolkata youth made a map of their squatters' colony and have been painstakingly tracking and collecting data around the health issues of water, sanitation, and infectious diseases. Map Your World adds technology to this equation and allows it to be replicated around the world. Using cell phones, youth can create customized surveys about public health issues or community issues of concern to them, and upload data at the moment of collection into a database that is linked to a digital online community map. The project leverages existing, proven technology, integrating Google Maps, GPS, Android phones, and an open source tool developed by the Modi Lab called Formhub (<http://www.formhub.org>).

With Map Your World, the data not only provides actionable information that can be used for policy change, but also tells the story of change. The project raises endless and exciting possibilities. From children in India mapping polio immunizations and access to clean water to children in Oakland mapping fresh food availability, gang violence, or bathrooms that aren't being cleaned in public schools, youth everywhere can map their concerns and share their stories on an interactive website, showing that young people truly can be the change agents in their communities.

A complete list of project partners is at <http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/map-your-world>. To become a Map Your World partner, contact Jenni at [jennin@stanford.edu](mailto:jennin@stanford.edu).

# Equal Opportunity for Girls

Among the changes that Prayasam hopes to achieve is to raise the status of girls, to give them the same opportunities that boys have. It is an ongoing struggle.

## **Status of women and girls in India**

The rape of a young woman on a bus in Delhi in December 2012, and her subsequent death, focused awareness on the general plight of women in India. In spite of the country's economic gains, it is still the case that women face a high degree of discrimination and abuse. Patriarchal mindsets are strong, especially in rural areas, where women are considered inferior and restricted to the roles of homemaker and childbearer. This attitude is behind the 12 million abortions of female fetuses over the last three decades; the marrying off of daughters at ages as young as 12 and 13; and the honor killings, rapes, and domestic violence experienced by many women in traditional communities—all this in a country that has had a female prime minister and where women work as doctors, lawyers, and bureaucrats. There are, in effect, two Indias, and organizations such as Prayasam are working to remove the entrenched inequality between the sexes in poor communities.

## **Sources:**

- » <http://csrindia.org/blog/category/womens-rights-and-gender-issues-in-india/>
- » <http://www.trustlaw.org/news/india-advances-but-many-women-still-trapped-in-dark-ages/>

## **Benefits of empowering girls**

Educating girls has long-term effects both for the girls themselves and for society. It allows them to develop valuable skills so that they become part of the workforce and contribute to the economy. Educating a girl has a ripple effect, as she is able to extend the benefits of her education to her children and to others beyond her family. She is better equipped to play an important role in the community and a role in socializing her children to be good and active citizens.

Through education, girls as well as boys can develop aspirations and goals to work toward. And education, whether from a traditional school or a program such as Prayasam, trains the next generation of both male and female leaders.

## **Source:**

- » <http://www.ungei.org/gap>





## Topics and Issues Relevant to *The Revolutionary Optimists*

A screening of *The Revolutionary Optimists* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

**Access to water**

**Children's rights**

**Child labor**

**Economic development**

**Government social policies**

**Polio immunization**

**Public health improvement**

**Community organizing**

**Empowerment of girls and boys**

**Elimination of poverty**

**Urban planning**

**Civic participation of children and adolescents**

## Thinking More Deeply

1. As an adult, what is your reaction to the work of Amlan Ganguly and Prayasam? How do you feel about children being empowered to bring about change?
2. Do you think adults in general accept the idea of children and adolescents having a voice in issues that affect their lives? Why is there resistance to that idea?
3. Do you agree with Ganguly that change has to start with children? What sorts of changes are better to start with children? Why is that?
4. Ganguly tells one of his groups, "Before having victory over others, let us have victory over ourselves." What does he mean by this?
5. Would the Prayasam model work in the United States? If so, where? Would it have to be modified? If so, how?
6. Can you point to some examples of organizations that are run by children or where children take the lead roles in the United States? What impact have you seen from these organizations?
7. During the River of Life exercise, one of the girls in the group says her father won't let her study anymore because he can't trust her. Why doesn't her father trust her? What does this have to do with giving her an education?
8. How are girls empowered by participation in Prayasam?
9. Can girls' status change just by opening up educational and other opportunities to them? What else has to change in order for girls to be seen as truly equal?
10. What does the title "Revolutionary Optimists" refer to? Why "revolutionary"? Why "optimists"?



# Suggestions for Action

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Participate in Map Your World, a project that grew out of *The Revolutionary Optimists*. Work with a youth organization or school group to assess a local condition, such as vacant lots that can be put to good use or sources of fresh produce in a low-income neighborhood. The group can map that information as a step in making needed changes. For more information go to <http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/map-your-world>. To become a Map Your World partner, contact Jenni at [jennin@stanford.edu](mailto:jennin@stanford.edu).
2. Help to empower young people in your area. Work with the Boys & Girls Club or another youth organization to identify and make a change in the community. Check this website ([http://www.ehow.com/list\\_7280343\\_youth-empowerment-activities.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_7280343_youth-empowerment-activities.html)) for some ideas that might get you started, and consult the guidelines listed in the Children as Agents of Change section in this guide.
3. Work with girls in your community to reach out to girls in developing countries. Girls Helping Girls partners middle and high school girls in the United States with girls in developing countries to share information and activities based on the UN Millennium Development Goals: Eradicating Poverty, Increasing Access to Education, Improving Health, and Promoting Peace. To find out how you can be involved, go to <http://www.empoweragirl.org/pages/page.php?pageid=1>.
4. Join other activists in fighting to end poverty and injustice in countries around the world through Action Aid International (<http://www.actionaid.org/>). The “What You Can Do” section of the website specifies actions that U.S. citizens can take. In addition, Activista, Action Aid’s U.S. branch, (<http://www.actionaidusa.org/>) is designed for youth to connect and engage with their counterparts in other countries through social media.
5. Volunteer for an organization that works to alleviate the problems children in developing countries face every day – poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and disease. One such organization is Save the Children. Find out more about how you can help at <http://www.savethechildren.org/>.

For additional outreach ideas, visit <http://www.communitycinema.org>. For local information, check the website of your PBS station



# Resources

- » <http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/> – This is the official website for the film.
- » <http://prayasam.org> – The Prayasam website explains the beginnings, philosophy, and current projects of the organization featured in *The Revolutionary Optimists*.
- » <https://www.ashoka.org/> – Ashoka strives to shape a global, entrepreneurial, competitive citizen sector, one that allows social entrepreneurs to thrive and enables the world's citizens to think and act as change makers.

## India Information

- » <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384> – This BBC news site contains both historical information and recent news about India.
- » <http://www.sacw.net/rubrique3.html> – This section of South Asia Citizens Web contains links to articles about women's rights in India.
- » <http://www.indiatogether.org/women/> – India Together (IT) is an electronic publication devoted to coverage of public affairs, policy, and development in India. This page contains articles about status and rights and other issues pertaining to girls and women in India.
- » <http://www.concernedforworkingchildren.org/> – The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) is an NGO in India that has been working in the field of child labor since 1980. The CWC works with local governments, communities, and working children themselves to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable, and appropriate solutions in partnership with all the major actors, so that children do not have to work. It empowers working children so that they may be their own first line of defense and participate in an informed manner in all decisions concerning themselves.

## Children's Rights and Empowerment

- » <http://www.care.org> – CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor women and girls because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to help whole families and entire communities escape poverty. Women and girls are at the heart of CARE's efforts to improve education, health, and economic opportunity.
- » <http://crin.org/> – The Children's Rights International Network (CRIN) is a global children's rights network that presses for rights, not charity, and a systemic shift in how governments and societies view children. The site provides information on children's rights, arranged by theme, in countries throughout the world.
- » <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/> – The Childwatch International Research Network is a global network of institutions that collaborate in child research for the purpose of promoting child rights and improving children's wellbeing around the world.
- » [http://www.girlscouts.org/who\\_we\\_are/global/](http://www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/global/) – Global Girl Scouting is dedicated to ensuring the Girl Scout Movement provides opportunities for girls to understand their relationship to the larger world—even if they do not travel beyond their local community—so they develop into responsible global citizens.
- » <http://www.unicef.org/> – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provides long-term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. It works for children's rights, their survival and development, guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- » [http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/index\\_child\\_led.html](http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/index_child_led.html) – This child and youth participation resource guide from UNICEF provides a wide range of tools pertaining to the creation and administration of youth-led organizations.
- » <http://studentsrebuild.org/> – Students Rebuild mobilizes young people to connect, learn, and take action on critical global issues.
- » <http://www.worldvision.org> – World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Recognizing women and girls as critical partners in development, World Vision works to equip, protect, and advocate for women in nearly 100 countries.

- » <http://www.planusa.org/content1111664> – Plan's Child Centered Community Development approach helps millions of children learn about their rights and take an active role in their communities' development. We work with children, their families and communities to identify problems and implement solutions.

## Girls Only

- » <http://www.girlup.org> – Girl Up is an innovative campaign of the United Nations Foundation designed to give American girls the opportunity to become global leaders and channel their energy and compassion to raise awareness and funds for United Nations programs that help some of the world's hardest-to-reach adolescent girls.
- » <http://www.empoweragirl.org/pages/page.php?pageid=1> – Girls Helping Girls is an international nonprofit organization based in San Jose, California that empowers all girls to transform their world by mobilizing them to engage in cultural exchange, gain a global education, and create and lead social change.
- » <http://go.worldbank.org/1L4BH3TG20> – This World Bank site provides comprehensive information on the value of girls' education in developing countries.
- » <http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professional-development/childlit/girlist.html> – This is list of web sites of organizations devoted to empowering girls and young women.

## Examples of youth-led projects:

- » [http://archive.idrc.ca/Nayudamma/children\\_92e.html](http://archive.idrc.ca/Nayudamma/children_92e.html) – India; uses the child-to-child approach to focus on health, hygiene and the environment.
- » <http://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/resource/children-agents-change-Africa>; practitioners' perspectives on children's participation in Community-Led Total Sanitation
- » <http://www.add-resources.org/children-as-agents-of-change.4893466-76188.html> – Bangalore, India; children's influence on alcohol and drug policy.
- » <http://sarahfrost.blogspot.com/2011/10/children-as-agents-of-change-in-south.html> – South Africa; children as change agents on a range of community health issues.
- » <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/969/sc32.html> – Egypt; project to improve the quality of drinking water, sanitary facilities and hygiene practices and increase environmental awareness.

# Credits

**Karen Zill**  
Writer

**Jocelyn Truitt**  
Copy Editor

## **ITVS Engagement & Education Team**

**Chi Do**  
Director of Engagement & Education

**Renee Gasch**  
Engagement & Education Coordinator

**Annelise Wunderlich**  
Education Manager

**Meredith Anderson-McDonald**  
Engagement & Education Assistant

**Michael Silva**  
Senior Designer

**Brittany Truex**  
Graphic Designer

## **ITVS**

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy Award-winning series *Independent Lens* on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Learn more at [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org)

## **Women and Girls Lead**

Women and Girls Lead is an innovative public media initiative designed to focus, educate, and connect women, girls and their allies across the globe to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Combining independent film, television, new media, and global outreach, partnerships, Women and Girls Lead engages an international network of citizens and organizations to act locally and reach out globally.

Learn more at [www.womenandgirlslead.org](http://www.womenandgirlslead.org)

