2020-2021 Annual Report
Investing in the individual girl
When she leads, change follows
Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

All around the world, the loss experienced last year was a catalyst for profound learning and extraordinary courage. It has been no different at Shadhika.

At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, our leadership revised our operational budget so the organization could weather the uncertainty in the following months while prioritizing the integrity of our grantmaking.

But Shadhika didn’t stop there.

In the midst of the pandemic, the Board completed its executive search, and I joined the organization as Executive Director in May. My predecessor in the position left a solid foundation for Shadhika to build upon, but the world was shifting in seismic ways and Shadhika would need to re-imagine its work, leaning into our values to chart the path forward.

Internally, the security and safety of our staff was paramount. We abandoned our plans to gather in person and had to adapt to working from home. This meant navigating the personal and the professional in the same spaces. Our organizational culture had to expand and be more inclusive yet respectful of individual boundaries. On page 9, Shadhika Board Chair Diane Sigel and Shadhika Program Officers Kendra Nicolai and Upasana Saha share their experiences and reflections leading our work into uncharted territory.

Externally, the security and safety of local partners and program participants was just as important. Shadhika reflected upon its own position as a funder and made swift changes to our Supports for Success program. We provided financial flexibility to our partners, enabling their gender-sensitive crisis response to be tailored to the unique needs of the communities served. On page 6, field staff Reena from Jabala and Tina from Milaan describe the challenges they faced and their tireless work to overcome them.

Shadhika revised our due diligence to ensure that Shadhika Scholars would receive their scholarship funds despite the unprecedented scale of disruption to the education system of India. In their own words, Shadhika Scholars Beauty and Sheetal express their ongoing anxiety but also their perseverance and hope in 2021 (page 7).

More than a year later, Shadhika is continuing to navigate how best to support the young women in India from a world away. Unlike the situation in the U.S. where the summer is marking a return to some level of normalcy, India is in the throes of its worst surge of the pandemic. The ongoing humanitarian crisis is likely to leave the country and its population much worse off than in 2020, women and girls suffering the brunt of it.

Among all the hard lessons Shadhika learned in 2020, we are persuaded that the mission of our organization is evergreen and more needed than ever, as indicators of gender-based violence and discrimination are worsening because of the pandemic.

We are heartened by our most loyal donors and supporters who carried us through a year of financial uncertainty.

But most significantly, we found existential confirmation in the deeper meaning of our tagline: When she leads, change follows. Shadhika’s theory of change (pages 4-5) has found its unequivocal proof of concept in the examples of leadership the young women of Shadhika demonstrated in 2020. They led the way to inform, feed, and protect their communities during the most trying times of their generation.

They will lead the way in 2021 as well, and Shadhika will be right beside them.

On behalf of all of us at Shadhika, thank you for standing in solidarity with Shadhika and the young women of India.

In solidarity,

My Lo Cook
Executive Director

The young women of India will lead the way in 2021, and Shadhika will be right beside them.
Shadhika partners with female-led organizations who create local solutions to empower young women personally and professionally.

For each young woman Shadhika supports, she will reach an average of 112 peers and create a ripple effect of change across her community and in India.
Shadhika understands that a young woman in India will experience critical development moments during which she is vulnerable to threats that will affect the course of her life permanently.

Shadhika also believes that long term funding strategies are key to support the sustained efforts necessary to create systemic change and uproot complex patriarchal rules that continue to subject a young woman in India to gender-based discrimination and violence.

Therefore, in order to achieve the above mission, Shadhika’s theory of change is based on two basic principles:

- **Investing in the expertise and innovation of grassroots leadership to create local solutions, and**
- **Investing in the transformative power of the individual girl for change.**

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**GRASSROOTS LEADERS**

Our local partners are women-led, community-based organizations who model female leadership in the most marginalized communities where patriarchal rules are deeply entrenched. Our partners incubate local solutions to uproot complex issues of gender inequality and inequity in India. Shadhika enters every partnership with the understanding that systemic change requires long funding horizons. Therefore, Shadhika provides multi-year grants tailored to the unique circumstances of each of our partners. With this sustained financial commitment, those organizations have the security and freedom to create solutions that focus on the self-advocacy, emotional and physical health, and education of young women through the most vulnerable stages of their development.

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**THE INDIVIDUAL GIRL**

We know that when we invest in young women, indicators of economic and social welfare improve for their families and their communities. Through the local accompaniment by our partners and the financial support of our Shadhika Scholarships, the individual girl is free and empowered to make her own decisions related to her health, education and career goals, finances, and family planning, effectively changing the course of her life. As she overcomes the risks of early and forced marriage, domestic abuse, and other forms gender-based discrimination and violence, she becomes a powerful agent of replication by lifting up a generation beside and behind her. She becomes the catalyst of a cultural shift that challenges traditional patriarchal rules.

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This two-pronged, bottom-up approach is the manifestation of Shadhika’s belief in the plurality of feminisms that powers a groundswell of self-determination and true gender liberation rippling around the world.
Supports for Success

Amplifying the work of local feminist leadership addressing gender inequity in underserved communities in India

Shadhika believes in the innovation of grassroots leadership to combat gender inequity and injustice in India. Supports for Success is a site-based program that involves both long-term investment in grassroots feminist leadership and a hyper-localized approach to address the unique challenges preventing young women from succeeding in school as a pathway to economic independence.

Partners work with some of the most marginalized girls and women in India from ethnic, religious, and caste minorities. Some of the partners work directly with the daughters of sex workers in Kolkata to interrupt intergenerational sex work. Other partners deliver comprehensive life-skills building and rights education in rural villages in Uttar Pradesh where indicators of gender equality are consistently the lowest in the country.

In 2020, Shadhika’s local partners and program participants’ showed innovation and resilience, addressing their communities’ immediate needs for food, shelter, and healthcare, but also long-term concerns of safety and security. As the pandemic continues to ravage India, the young women’s educational goals, as well as their emotional and physical health, are hanging by a thread while rates of forced marriage and gender-based violence increase.

For these young women, the local partners of Shadhika have been havens of support and safety. They have pivoted their girl-centered activities to provide emergency material relief while also prioritizing leadership development through peer mentorship and community organizing. They bridged the gender technology gap by leveraging their own infrastructure (e.g. computers, tablets, cell phones, etc.) to ensure connectivity and learning. They built new partnerships with local stakeholders to meet unprecedented needs. These organizations’ efforts continue to work in overdrive to be their communities’ first line of defense against starvation, domestic violence, and school dropout.

At Shadhika, we continue to make real-time decisions, including increasing funding flexibility for the partners and organizing quarterly virtual Partner Roundtables to promote collaboration, cross-learning and solidarity. Here’s what some of the partners had to share from a recent roundtable:

“...The girls come from very low-income families where there are more mouths to feed and only one earning member [of their family], so that increases the economic hardship. Automatically girls education becomes the least priority. The leadership program creates opportunities for girls to continue with their education.

– Reena, Program Coordinator, Sahiyar

“...During the nationwide lockdown, Girl Icon participant Jyoti failed to find sanitary pads. [She] realized how women and girls in the community must be facing the same shortage. She learned to make cloth sanitary pads online and taught the same to 5 of her peers. Collectively they [went to] different locations, door-to-door teaching. Over 90 women and girls received the training from them.

– Tina, Associate Director, Milaan Foundation

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Supports for Success

Amplifying the work of local feminist leadership addressing gender inequity in underserved communities in India

| total number of girls served in 2020 | 4006 |
| percentage of girls who completed secondary school | 90% |
| percentage of girls who escaped early, forced marriage | 100% |
| number of scholarships awarded in 2020 | 49 |
Due to systemic poverty and patriarchal pressures to get married at a young age, college education and vocational training remain out of reach for many young women in India. These women become trapped in entrenched systems of gender-based discrimination and violence. This is especially true for the young women supported by Shadhika.

Through its Scholarship Program, Shadhika provides college and vocational scholarships to young women who have demonstrated academic potential and excellent leadership to promote girls’ rights issues. In addition to full tuition and room and board support, Shadhika Scholars are eligible to receive English tutoring, a computer, and computer literacy classes. In 2021, Shadhika will provide a comprehensive Technology Package that will also cover connectivity costs. The Scholars practice their English skills—required to complete many post-secondary degrees—through a pen pal program managed by Shadhika. Finally, the Scholars must lead a Community Leadership Project, cultivating a strong ethos of service.

At the onset of the pandemic, colleges and universities in India pivoted to online learning. This shift uncovered stark realities for young women in India where internet penetration stands at 45%, revealing a technology gap that disproportionately affects women and girls. The job loss related to the pandemic put Indian daughters at higher risks of early marriage.

Yet, the Scholars showed perseverance and courage to navigate their new virtual learning environments, to be a source of emotional support to each other, and to be their own fiercest advocate. In Delhi, they organized a drive to collect clothes and basic necessities the day after a fire ravaged through their communities. Many identified menstrual poverty as a dangerous impediment to a girl’s education and organized workshops to raise awareness and manufacture sanitary pads at home. Almost all of the Scholars had to negotiate with their families to prioritize their career goals. After a year of unprecedented challenges, the Scholars continue to live out Shadhika’s tagline: When she leads, change follows. We connected with Shadhika Scholars Beauty and Shital to learn about their experience as young female students during the pandemic. Here’s what they had to say:

“This year, I learned nothing is more important than life. I took care of my family and helped them follow the safety rules. This year was difficult as a student, especially with online studies. Days passed by and I missed my college and friends. It feels like my future and career opportunities are being destroyed by the pandemic. I hope with vaccinations, the situation can be in control again. I want regular days with friends, normal studies and for people to be safe again.

- Beauty G., Year 2 Scholar from Jabala

“When I applied for the course, I thought they were physical classes but it was all virtual because of the pandemic. I had no issues with the online class but the only drawback was the 40-minute time limit. Many deaf students were unable to ask questions. The course was great but instead of virtual classes, I would really prefer physical classes so I can interact with the teacher in Sign Language and learn more. I can make new deaf friends and share knowledge as well.

- Shital R., Year 1 Scholar from Sahiyar

This year, 100% of Scholars who graduated from college and 100% percentage of Scholars who stayed in school during the pandemic in 2020.
DAWN Initiative
A multi-year, grassroots collaboration to end gender-based violence in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, India

Shadhika recognizes that to achieve true gender justice systemic levers of change must be activated and those continue to be guarded by men. For these reasons, in 2019, Shadhika started the DAWN Initiative to End Gender-Based Violence in the remote villages of Uttar Pradesh. Through local partners who are embedded in those communities, Shadhika aims to eradicate gender-based violence by affecting behavior change of men and boys through age-appropriate rights education and community-based sensitization campaigns.

All community-based activities had to find safer, often virtual modalities, to transfer knowledge, model new behaviors, and monitor gender-based violence. Despite countless challenges, an endline survey showed evidence of success and lessons learned to inform Year 2 of the DAWN Initiative.

The Panchayat Samiti is a rural governing body. Now, new redress mechanisms will equip them to remedy gender-based incidents of violence. In Year 2, they will activate these mechanisms to recognize GBV as a grave community concern requiring collective action.

Unsurprisingly, early adopters of ideas and behaviors upholding gender equality were female and of younger generations. In Year 2, these early adopters will work with newcomers in accountability pairs to workshop new curriculum.

Young early adopters encountered disapproval from male elders within their own homes. Recognizing the intergenerational nature of patriarchal values, Year 2 will conduct family-centric interventions to reduce reprisal inside the home.

Finally, drawing from the lessons from previous epidemics such as Zika and Ebola, the DAWN Initiative partners will keep women and girls in positions of authority in the design and implementation of program activities to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on indicators of gender equality.

In addition to some promising quantitative results shown in the endline survey, the most moving details were evidenced in program participants’ testimonials and anecdotal observations by the local partners’ field staff. Here’s what they had to say:

“This program provided a safe space and support system to me and the other women in my village. It made us confident to use our voices against GBV.”

—Manju, Program Participant in Varanasi

“If you had met me earlier, you may have refused even talking to me. Now, at least I have the capability to recognize my flaws and take actions to rectify them as an individual. Self-improvement takes time and is most difficult. I don’t think I have completely changed, but each day I am trying my best to improve and reflect on my own behavior.”

—Ram Babu, Program Participant in Varanasi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Participants with an Increased Understanding of GBV</th>
<th>Number of Men and Boys Reached Through DAWN</th>
<th>Percentage of Women Participants Who Felt Safe in Their Homes and Communities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>68%</td>
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Inside Shadhika

Working together to serve the young women of India during the pandemic while upholding Shadhika’s values and mission

An intense year of loss and uncertainty tested Shadhika’s ability to respond to the pandemic unfolding in two countries simultaneously. It required humanity, astute stewardship of resources, and adaptability in all aspects of the organization. The Leaders for Change Summit in Kolkata was cancelled and replaced by a virtual gathering. Start-up efforts to launch the Ready for Work and Climate Change initiatives were postponed for 12 months. All internal functions were streamlined yet Shadhika staff and board worked in concert to ensure maximum flexibility and responsiveness.

Shadhika is made up of incredibly talented and passionate people who found resilience, strength, and inspiration in themselves and each other to advance Shadhika’s mission relentlessly during this once-in-a-generation shift. Here’s what they had to say:

“Nobody’s life is the same, will be the same after what we lived through this past year. And I believe that the Board really needs to have a mind shift. We need to be looking towards India for the answers, for what’s needed, for what we need to do instead of us being the providers of programing. We really need to listen and I’m hoping that we can get there.”

– Diane Sigel, Shadhika Board Chair

“We should strive to push through discomfort and fear to make decisions that are really driven by feminist values and the humility to correct our mistakes and to ensure that every decision is governed by a human rights and a rights-based perspective. In this time of global crisis, that is when you are able to articulate your theories into action and into practice.”

– Upasana Saha, Shadhika Program Officer

“Our priority should be to continue to be flexible with grant making and move in the direction of trust-based philanthropy. I think Shadhika has done a lot of work to get to this place and this year proved more than ever that we need to be flexible. We need to trust our partners and listen to our partners and program participants because they know best and we are here to support them. And so, I believe we need to continue to move in that direction whether there is a pandemic or not.”

– Kendra Nicolai, Shadhika Program Officer

number of stories, op-ed’s, and field reports shared on the blog in 2020: 56

number of sustaining Shadhika donors in 2020: 525

SCAN FOR MORE DAWN & Team stories online
Financials
Audited, prepared by Taylor, Roth & Company, LLC

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenues & Other Support

Contributions $389,315
Special Events, Revenue $6,904
Direct Expenses, Less ($1,775)
Interest Income, Loss $2,216
Other $240
In-Kind Contributions $750

TOTAL REVENUE $397,560

Expenditures

Program Services $397,512
Management & General $55,568
Fundraising $59,766

TOTAL EXPENDITURES $512,846

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS $115,286

Assets

Cash $360,849
Pledges & Grants $123,725
Prepaid Expenses & Deposits $12,522
Other Assets $147,548

TOTAL ASSETS $644,644

Liabilities & Net Assets

Liabilities **$40,709
Net Assets $528,986

TOTAL $569,695

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

PROGRAMS: 77%
MANAGEMENT & GENERAL: 11%
FUNDRAISING: 12%

PROGRAM SERVICES

SUPPORTS FOR SUCCESS: 15%
CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE: 2%
COVID-19 FUND: 11%
GIRLS’ WRITES & COMPUTERS: 14%
SCHOLARS: 28%
LEADERS FOR CHANGE SUMMIT: 8%
READY FOR WORK: 2%
DAWN INITIATIVE: 10%
ADVOCACY: 2%
MAKING HERSTORY: 8%

VERIFIED ACCREDITATIONS

Financials for January-December 2020 fiscal year.
**Liabilities includes $30,900 in Paycheck Protection Program Loan.
Team

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Colorado Springs, CO, USA

GILLIAN FORD  
Marketing Manager  
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Program Officer  
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UPASANA SAHA  
Program Officer  
Pune, Maharashtra, India

SABAH SIDDIQUI  
Donor & Program Associate  
Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

JENNA SWEIG  
Development Coordinator  
Denver, CO, USA

Team as of March 31, 2021.

Board

LISA ACREE  
Board Vice Chair

VANESSA CHAUHAN  
Board Member

NANDITA GEERDINK  
Board Member

JANET GRAY  
Board Chair

SUSAN HERZIG  
Immediate Past Board Chair

LISA ACREE  
Board Vice Chair

UMA IYER  
Board Member

LAKSHMI KRISHNAN  
Board Treasurer

SIGNE KURIAN  
Board Member

DIANE SIGEL  
Board Chair

Board as of March 31, 2021.

Partners

BAALE MANE  
Karnataka, India

DAWN INITIATIVE PARTNERS  
Uttar Pradesh, India

JABALA ACTION RESEARCH ORGANIZATION  
Bengal, India

MILAAN FOUNDATION  
Uttar Pradesh, India

SAHIYAR  
Gujarat, India

STOP INDIA  
Delhi, India

UDDAMI  
West Bengal, India

VACHA TRUST  
Maharashtra, India

Partners as of December 31, 2020.

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