4Girls GLocal Leadership wanted to hear the voices, values and visions of today’s girls and young women, worldwide. So we launched the first-ever Women’s Empowerment Global Survey.

**Voice & Choice: What Young Women Want**

is the preliminary report of our findings.

READ ON TO DISCOVER HOW ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN RESPONDED TO:

- What do **Voice** and **Choice** mean to you? How do you use them?
- How much control do you have in various aspects of your life?
- What would you like to change the most in your life?
- **Who contributes** the most to making that change?
- If you have made changes in your life, **what caused the change**?
- What is the **most important issue** to you and girls and women in your society?
INTRODUCTION: Why This Survey? Why Now?

The 21st-century Call to Action is to empower girls and women around the world. It is key to economic growth, social transformation, and peace and security for us all. World leaders, global development experts, and scholars alike are giving their voice to amplify this call to action.

“When women succeed, nations are more safe, secure, and prosperous.”
– Barack Obama, 44th U.S. President

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”
– Kofi Annan, 7th UN Secretary General

“Empowering women is key to building a future we want.”
– Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics

So why aren’t we empowering girls and women on a massive scale?

On the contrary, horrific violence and human rights abuse are perpetrated against them – every minute, every hour, every day. In fact, more than 100 million girl babies have been killed, aborted, or neglected to die simply because they were girls. This is more than the total number of men, women, and children killed in all the conflicts and wars of the 20th Century.

So how do we empower girls and women? What exactly is women’s empowerment?

Surprisingly, there is no common definition or understanding of women’s empowerment. And in actuality, the word “empowerment” does not even exist in many languages. Although widely used in the Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment space (and beyond), the phrase women’s empowerment is referring to the issues – economic empowerment, political participation, and girls’ education – not directly defining and activating it within women themselves.

There is also lack of data on women’s empowerment. Most of what we know is on gender equality – or more accurately inequality – counting the number of boys vs. girls, or men vs. women.

Therefore, 4GGL – For Girls GLocal Leadership – launched the first-ever Women’s Empowerment Global Survey.

As a social change movement and action to ignite the next generation of empowered women changemakers and leaders around the world, 4GGL targeted today’s adolescent girls and young women – a generation known as the Millennials.
From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, we heard their voices.

What unleashed your VOICE?

Knowledge is having the right answer.
Intelligence is asking the right question.


We hope Voice & Choice is a powerful catalyst to inspire a critically needed conversation about what truly empowers girls and women. Then in collaboration, we can amplify and leapfrog women’s empowerment as a sustainable and renewable power source to truly tackle and eliminate the paramount moral challenge of our time – mass atrocities and violence against girls and women around the world.

Jin In
Founder, 4Girls GLocal Leadership (4GGL)
DEMOGRAPHICS & METHODOLOGY

The target population of this survey is females, 18-32 years old. This report uses *young women* which includes adolescent girls (10-17 years old) and young-adult women (18-32 years old).

Data was collected through *Survey Monkey*, an online survey platform. It was disseminated to universities, civil society organizations, and individuals, online and off-line. The survey was user tested. We also received focus group feedback to more fully understand our findings.

- Open from March 1, 2014 to October 31, 2014.
- In five languages: English, French, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic (in order of availability with English running the longest, Arabic the shortest.)
- 167 completed surveys: 86% females; 14% males.
- Voices from 26 countries spanning Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and Diasporas in the United States.

**Top 8 Countries & Diasporas in U.S.**

- Pakistan
- Nepal
- India
- Morocco
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Jordan
- U.S.
- Asian, ME & African Diasporas in U.S.

**Top Religions**

- Sikhism
- Judaism
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Christianity

DEFINITION & OVERVIEW OF THE QUESTIONS

According to the World Bank:

“*Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.*”
Empowerment is a process. Through the process, an individual becomes an Agent of Change. Given that the word “empowerment” does not exist in many languages, this survey focused on Agency with two indicators, Voice and Choice in assessing and measuring Change.

- What do Voice and Choice mean to you? How do you use them?
- How much control do you have in various aspects of your life?
- What would you like to change the most in your life?
- Who contributes the most to making that change?
- If you have made changes in your life, what caused the change?
- What is the most important issue to you and girls and women in your society?

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESULTS: WHAT YOUNG WOMEN WANT**

1. More than ever before, today’s adolescent girls and young women around the world have more access and opportunities. They have the most choice and control in education, the least in career. The level varied widely by country and region with many in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East still struggling for basic human rights.

2. In both economically rich and poor countries, 30% use their voice regularly.

3. Globally, the #1 challenge facing today’s adolescent girls and young women is gender discrimination and violence, including conflict and war.

4. The #1 change today’s young women want is personal development (positive mental, spiritual and habitual skills). This is followed closely by career and income. With this said, there was an outlier. Uniquely in Iraq, Jordan and Egypt, the #1 change young women wanted was residency. Due to the conflict and war, they wanted to leave their country.

5. More than 60% identified themselves as the greatest contributor to creating change. Family and government were distant second and third (18% and 15% respectively.) Friends were the least contributing factor.

Now the critical question: For those young women who have become Agents of Change, how did it happen? A staggering 46% replied "self-awareness," a process of "knowing who they are." This was followed closely by experience. Education was a distant third. This is consistent with and reinforces what young women want.

They are seeking personal development in order to become more self-aware, confident, and have faith in themselves.
IN MORE DETAIL: WHAT YOUNG WOMEN REALLY WANT

Voice is not just about speaking. It is about both verbal and non-verbal expression, including drawing, music, and artwork. Nearly 40% of those surveyed used their voice and nearly 30% used it regularly to: “Speak up for the rights of others,” “Help the dispossessed,” and “Encourage others.” Blogging and Social Media are their medium to share ideas, as well as to fight for justice and equality—for oneself and others.

In your own words, what does it mean for you to have a VOICE?

✓ “It marks that ‘I exist.’” (Iraq)
✓ “Voice is Power.” (Nepal)
✓ “It’s both our right and duty.” (Jordan)

Who ENCOURAGES & DISCOURAGES you to speak freely and honestly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Encouraging</th>
<th>Discouraging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/ Partner</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss/ Colleagues</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/ Mentors</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/ Society</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt/ Politicians</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</table>
Encouraging Voice
Family, friends, and colleagues are more encouraging than discouraging in young women’s lives. And it does not take much. One respondent stated:

“They give me space to speak, and listen with love and understanding. They are present to listen fully to whatever I may have to share.”

Discouraging Voice
Many noted it was “more societal norms and discourses rather than individual people” that inhibit their voices.

Encouraging & Discouraging Voices
While social media like Facebook and blogging provide a platform for voice, traditional media like movies, advertisements, and music were reported to “contribute to a powerless feeling.”

How much CHOICE and CONTROL do you have?

The respondents had the most “full control” in education. They had the least “full control,” as well as the most “no control” in career. It is not surprising, then, that they are seeking change in career, as shown in the table below.
What 3 things do you want to CHANGE THE MOST in your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal Development</th>
<th>Career, Income</th>
<th>Local Mindset about Women</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Physical Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Third</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Third</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>First</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US, EU, AU</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is not shown in the table is that in only Iraq, Jordan and Egypt, young women wanted most to change where they lived—they wanted to move out of their country.

“The situation in Iraq in general [is very bad], not only “No peace” and destruction, but also psychological and social state of people around me [is very messed up].” (Iraq)

Agents of Change
We asked young women to assess the changes in their lives from three years ago to right now, on a scale of 1 to 10. For some, the scale jumped from 2 to 4. For others, they leaped from 1 to as high as 9. How did they do it? Who or what caused those changes?

A staggering 46% of respondents identified self-reflection about who they are, self-worth, purpose in life, and connecting with their inner strengths as what brought about positive changes and meaning in their lives. They noted that while age, maturity, and education are important catalysts for growth, “knowing who they are” is the key.
✓ “My own awareness of things that both limit and empower me [changed my life for the better].” (Washington DC, U.S.)

✓ “I have become more comfortable [with my own voice] and taking the initiative to create the changes I want.” (Boston, U.S.)

✓ “Being more aware of what I am worth has forced the change.” (Trinidad)

By analyzing the two graphs above together, we discovered that self-awareness is the most powerful tool for change agents; it is also what young women wanted to change the most.

Personal Development includes positive mental, spiritual and habitual skills and practices.

What is the MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE facing you, girls & women in your society?

- Rape and Domestic Violence in India, Pakistan, and Nepal.

- Ongoing War, Forced/Early Marriage and Sexual Harassment in Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.

- Poverty and Domestic Violence in Madagascar, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Trinidad, and Malawi.

- Gender Discrimination, and Social Pressure to “marry before 30,” to “handle both family and work”, and “to look perfect” in China.


In their own voice:

✓ “Sexual violation is a constant for women and girls in my community.” (American-Indian)

✓ “Women are not considered complete human beings.” (Iraq)

✓ “Breaking the no-no from society because she’s a girl!” (Iraq)

✓ “Girls and women are seen as only domestic beings with no rights.” (Ghana)
Supported by males:

✓ “Violence and verbal taunting, the subordination of women and acceptance of this persecution.” (Iraq)

✓ “The most important issue is Sexual Abuse.” (Kenya)

✓ “Disrespect [of females].” (India)

Who do you ADMIRE?

Many young women have people they look up to and admire. **Women Leaders** included local and national politicians, global activists, Marie Curie and Michelle Obama. **Men Leaders** included poets, scholars, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King. Others included Jesus and Prophet Muhammad.

**CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION**

This is a preliminary report of the results from **4GGL’s Women’s Empowerment Global Survey**. As qualitative research data, the breadth and depth of the responses are ceaseless. Each answer and every voice has a story. Thus far, the survey has unveiled profound and powerful insights about women’s empowerment. We now have evidence – some validating what we may already know, some contradicting conventional wisdom. We are simply releasing and openly sharing our analysis as it becomes available.
We are also boldly challenging the status quo and current work on women’s empowerment, particularly for girls and young women around the world. Girls' education has been and is the main focus. It is also what gets funded the most. Although education is critical and is the foundation for building civil societies, it should not be the only focus. It should not be assumed that education alone will result in women’s empowerment; our data shows otherwise.

The good news is that no matter the issue or the program—whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria or the United States of America—every single person, organization, institution, and government can take action now to empower girls and young women. We can support girls and young women in self-actualizing their own inner power – to truly empower them. This is what they want.

**Next Steps:**

Nowhere is women’s empowerment needed more than on the frontline in the battle against violence, war and terrorism.

4GGL is co-creating the first of its kind – a humanitarian vlog, in partnership with YouTube/Google, to show the world our most powerful force for change: a global sisterhood of empowered young women.

We are creating a counter force to the fear mongers. We will provide leadership training and will video-journal the lives of 7 Bold Millennial Women Changemakers in 7 of the world’s most violent countries. By utilizing social media and the power of storytelling, our goal is to mobilize peer-to-peer action and to create a ripple effect across YouTube’s 1 billion users.

Our 7 young women are making history – herstory. They are our future Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, building peace and security for us today. Please join us.

**Contact 4GGL to collaborate, partner and boldly fund this revolutionary action for our world’s girls.**

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