



MISSION

Anchored in the principle of human dignity, ICRW advances gender equity, inclusion and the alleviation of poverty worldwide.

Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)

Gender-based violence (GBV) is both pervasive and pernicious in its impact. In India, 4 out of 10 girls will experience sexual abuse during their teens. In 2012, ICRW's research found 59 percent of women experienced incidents of sexual harassment or assault within the past six months.¹ As a result, many parents withdraw their daughters from school upon reaching puberty, to protect their virtue. They believe this will keep them safe, but this is not actually the case.

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ICRW is on the frontlines of GBV prevention. For over a decade, ICRW has been testing and replicating the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) program, an intervention that promotes gender equality by encouraging equal relationships between girls and boys, examining the social norms that define men's and women's roles and questioning the use of violence. The GEMS model integrates classroom lessons with school-based campaigns and community outreach. It has proven to increase gender equitable attitudes and decrease students' tolerance of violent behavior.

GEMS is implemented in public schools, because schools are uniquely positioned to shape and influence children's understanding of their surroundings and gender constructs. And given that children spend such a lot of time in school, and in the presence of their peers, it made sense to meet children where they are: in schools.



1. UN Women and ICRW. 2013. "Unsafe: An Epidemic of Sexual Violence in Delhi's Public Spaces: Baseline Findings from the Safe Cities Delhi Programme." UN Women: New York & ICRW: Washington D.C.



How does GEMS work?

Working with 12- to 14-year-olds, the GEMS curriculum includes 24 classroom learning sessions facilitated over two years. The first year's sessions focus on gender, violence and bodily changes, and the second year's sessions include relationships, emotions, communication and conflict resolution. Sessions include a range of activities to keep kids engaged, including role-play, games and debates. The GEMS program contains group activities, like school plays and speeches during assembly, as well as individually focused activities, like the GEMS Diary, which is an interactive - yet personal - workbook of exercises and games.

GEMS Results

ICRW measured the impact of the GEMS pilot, using a quasi-experimental evaluation design. The intervention resulted in:

- positive and significant shifts in attitudes around gender and violence;
- enhanced recognition of violence and increased likelihood of bystander intervention;
- decline in support of corporal punishment;
- improved communication between students, including between boys and girls; and
- decline in acceptance of violence among peers.



GEMS Impact

The program, in short, is working to redefine masculinity and the way that children think about their roles in society. Our research indicates that when gender norms are challenged early on in life we are successful in dismantling the assumptions and related behaviors that shape and, ultimately, drive inequality.

In 2008, GEMS was piloted in 45 public schools in Mumbai. The pilot was so successful that the Maharashtra Government adapted and scaled-up the program to 20,000 schools impacting more than one million students.

Other states across the country started to take notice. Currently, GEMS is being implemented across five states in India and has expanded to Bangladesh, the Philippines and Vietnam.