

PRIVATE-PUBLIC INNOVATION FOR GIRLS: CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMMING AND GOVERNMENT SCALE-UP FOR HIV PREVENTION AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY GIRLS IN CHINA

Mercy Corps and PATH have been working in Southwest China to address the HIV prevention, life skills and livelihoods needs of vulnerable and ethnic minorities girls.

Issues

China's 106 million ethnic minorities disproportionately suffer the effects of migration, drug use and HIV/AIDS. **Minority girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV:**

- **Economically** – living in extreme poverty in communities highly affected by intravenous drug use with limited employment opportunities
- **Socially** – low social status, low levels of education and early marriage limit girls' negotiation power in sexual relationships

To address the complex HIV prevention and mitigation needs of minority adolescent girls, holistic programming involving partnerships across three sectors can contribute to *creative, comprehensive, and scalable* responses:

1. Local and international NGOs for technical expertise in health and life skills
2. Private sector employers who connect youth to livelihood opportunities
3. Public sector government agencies to take effective programs to scale

Creating strong programs to address girls' health, education and livelihood needs can attract government attention. In China, government support can translate into rapid scale up to reach thousands of girls.



Program Descriptions

Giving Leadership Opportunities to Young Women (GLOW) works to economically and socially empower ethnic minority adolescent girls aged 10-18 living in Yi villages in Sichuan Province, Southwest China to reduce their vulnerability to HIV through:

- HIV prevention, health and life skills education and peer education, including PATH health and life skills curricula and an adaptation of the Stepping Stones curriculum
- Community mobilization (e.g., local dances, films and community safe spaces)
- Job placement
- Training in Mandarin and Yi languages, math, sewing, basic agriculture
- Sports programs

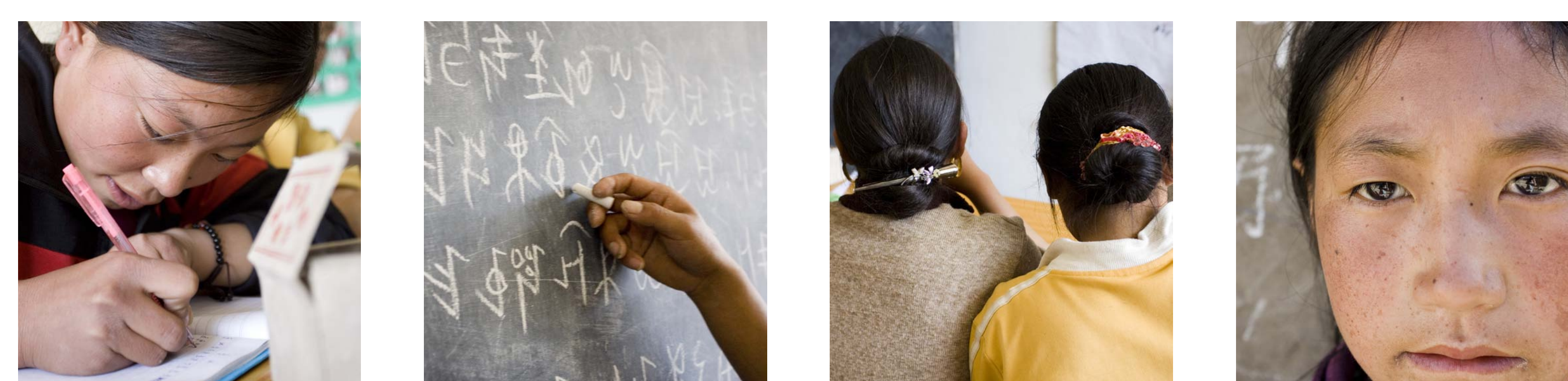
GLOW Context: Drug use is prevalent in Yi villages and 13% of people aged 15-50 are infected with HIV compared to 0.03% for all of China. Only 63% of Yi children attend primary school, 15% attend middle school and only 2% attend senior middle school. Of these students, very few are girls.



Spring Bud Healthy Development Project (SBHDP) set to increase empowerment and improve health and well-being for disadvantaged rural girls aged 10-19 living in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. SBHDP has:

- Incorporated HIV and AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, gender equity, self-esteem and decision-making content into the All China Women's Federation's Spring Bud Program (an existing livelihoods and general education curriculum)
- Conducted local and community advocacy around life planning skills education

SBHDP Context: While only 8% of China's total population is ethnic minorities, Guangxi has a large minority population (40%), and 36% of all HIV positive people in China are minorities. Girls' education in Guangxi is relatively underdeveloped, with a higher proportion than the national average of illiterate and semi-literate people.



Mercy Corps and PATH developed **strategic partnerships** to implement GLOW and SBHDP. **Implementing partners** include the Development Center for Liangshan Yi Women and Children, the GLOW implementer, and the China Children and Teenagers Fund and the Guangxi Women's Federation, the SBHDP partners.

Key Accomplishments

Coverage

GLOW has involved over 1,000 adolescents in HIV life skills education and 300 girls in job placement activities.

Nearly 40,000 adolescents participated in SBHDP life planning skills sessions.

Improvements in HIV knowledge, attitudes and behaviors

After completing two months of training, the percentage of GLOW peer education participants who:

- could give seven or more correct answers in an AIDS knowledge test increased from 31% to 98%
- reported hearing about HIV increased from 57% to 99%
- knew where to go for an HIV test increased from 24% to 89%.

Although HIV knowledge remains low in Guangxi, SBHDP contributed to improvements in girls' understanding of basic facts about HIV, including transmission and prevention.

Going to Scale

The SBHDP and Project GLOW program accomplishments and partnerships have attracted significant government notice, with the following results:

- In Guangxi, **government** support has catalyzed **SBHDP** program expansion into additional schools, reaching 40,000 adolescents
- In Liangshan Prefecture within Sichuan, the **Bureau of Education** plans to scale up the PATH curriculum in the region's primary and secondary schools.
- Mercy Corps plans to integrate GLOW peer education curriculum with provincial government partners, such as the Sichuan Youth League.

Project GLOW is one of the first civil society initiatives to influence government to scale up HIV prevention and life skills programming in China.

Lessons Learned: Gaining Government Buy-in to Scale Up Interventions

Implement innovative programmatic approaches

GLOW attracted government attention through innovative activities to engage youth (e.g., youth boards, peer-to-peer education, youth clubs) and mobilize communities, using traditional song and dance and participatory processes.

Conduct strategic communication with local government decision-makers

Strategic conversations with local government officials, including Ministries outside the Department of Health (e.g., Department of Education) facilitated scaling up of activities.

In China once programs attract government support, rapid expansion is feasible.

Partner with government organizations to ensure buy-in

SBHDP expanded rapidly because it partnered with the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), a government supported NGO, who already had government buy-in, nationwide reach, and existing Spring Bud curriculum.

Next Steps

Mercy Corps and PATH, with research partners, will:

- Evaluate the outcomes of HIV prevention scale-up on girls, local government and the civil society sector.
- Disseminate results to government, civil society and other international NGOs to improve HIV programming for China's most vulnerable youth.

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